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**The Triumph of Pragmatic Imperialism: Lord Minto and the
Defence of the Empire, 1898-1910**

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of Philosophy

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Abstract

While relatively neglected in the historiography, the 4th Earl of Minto, who achieved the distinction of serving consecutively as Governor-General of Canada and Viceroy of India from 1898-1910, is more truly representative of the methods Britain adopted to govern its Empire than his more illustrious contemporaries. He was one of the many aristocrats who, while increasingly marginalised in other aspects of British political life, were believed to possess important qualities that made them ideally suited to the highest levels of imperial service. As part of the governing elite, Britain's aristocrats shared many of the assumptions held by politicians, civil servants and military officers, about imperial governance. Vague notions circulated about Britain's duty to civilize its possessions, but most policy-makers eschewed 'ideological' visions in favour of a more pragmatic approach based on recognition that protecting the empire from both internal and external threats was vital to maintaining Britain's leading position amongst its rival Great Powers. The pragmatism of its governors provided an element of continuity in the diverse territories of Britain's empire.

This thesis examines the role of Lord Minto in the formation of defence and foreign policy to illustrate the centrality of the pragmatic approach to British imperialism. He held his posts at a time of transition for the Empire. Ideas about the duties of imperial governors were changing, as power shifted either to local governments in the self-governing colonies or back to the metropole from the periphery. Yet as Britain faced an increasing range of challenges, governors remained able to influence many of the decisions made in response. Like most governors Minto worked under a series of constraints. He was forced to repair the damage caused by his predecessors and contain the unrealistic aspirations of his superiors, although, a soldier himself, he found his military colleagues a valuable source of support throughout his career. In Canada Minto worked hard to ensure that Laurier's government accepted its imperial responsibilities, most notably during the South African war, but also that his British superiors understood Canadian attitudes towards the Empire and rapprochement with America. As Viceroy, Minto's priority remained protecting the security of the Raj, particularly the strategically vital North West Frontier, often against the insistence of a Liberal government focused on economic retrenchment. That he was able to achieve these aims and restore stability to previously troubled territories is a tribute to the effectiveness of pragmatism.

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Declaration

This thesis comprises my own work, unless otherwise acknowledged, and has not previously been submitted for examination in any other form.

Signed.....

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the references and bibliography:

Primary Sources:

BL = British Library

BL Add Mss = British Library Additional Manuscripts

BL IOL = British Library India Office Library

CO = Colonial Office

LMCP = Lord Minto's Canadian Papers Vols. I & II (The Champlain Society, Toronto, 1981)

NAS = National Archives of Scotland

NLS = National Library of Scotland

TNA = The National Archives

WO = War Office

Journal Titles:

AHR = American Historical Review

AJPH = Australian Journal of Politics and History

BIHR = Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research

BJCS = British Journal of Canadian Studies

BSOAS = Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies

CHR = Canadian Historical Review

CJH = Canadian Journal of History

CSHS = Comparative Studies in History and Society

D&S = Diplomacy & Statecraft

EHR = English Historical Review

Econ HR = Economic History Review

HJ = Historical Journal

IHR = International History Review

INS = Intelligence & National Security

JBS = Journal of British Studies

JCHA = Journal of the Canadian Historical Association

JCS = Journal of Canadian Studies

JCPS = Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies

JCH = Journal of Contemporary History

JICH = Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History

JMilH = Journal of Military History

JModH = Journal of Modern History

JSAHR = Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research

JSS = Journal of Strategic Studies

MAS = Modern Asian Studies

PHR = Pacific Historical Review

P&P = Past & Present

TAPS = Transactions of the American Philosophical Society

TRHS = Transactions of the Royal Historical Society

1. Introduction

The Ideas of Empire: Britain and 'Pragmatic Imperialism'

Lord Minto's career as Governor General of Canada and Viceroy of India provides a useful illustration of the methods that dominated Britain's approach towards governing its Empire, the arguments about which made by Judd and Brown are echoed by many other historians:

Above all, and despite many failings and occasional brutalities, the British steered clear of high-minded theory and tended to approach the enormous test of imperial rule with a relatively humane pragmatism.¹

British imperialism was a pragmatic exercise, the response to current pressures, threats and opportunities.²

Discussion or analysis of the foundations of British imperial rule was rare and few attempts were made to define its principles or shape it to fit a central paradigm.³ Contrary to some modern beliefs, British expansion was never driven by a desire to assert racial superiority, and such ideology was conspicuous by its absence.⁴ Instead, to ease the pressures of governing an enormous heterogeneous Empire, British imperialism was based on a flexible pragmatism. Policies evolved from the reaction to events and adaptation to local circumstances, as the lessons of attempting to mould these to suit British desires were swiftly learned from mistakes, such as had occurred in India in 1857.

British imperialism was instead based on a set of shared 'unspoken assumptions' that were so obvious to all those who shared in the process of policy-making they seldom had to be evinced. The similar backgrounds of the 'ruling elite,' where politicians, officials, imperial administrators and generals often came from aristocratic families, created a common ethos about the nature of British interests and the methods to be adopted in defending them. Robinson and Gallagher described this phenomenon as the 'official mind,' which successfully insulated itself from the pressures of those, either missionaries or

¹ D. Judd, 'The Impact of Imperialism' *BBC History* 9 (1) (2008), p. 25.

² J.M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of a Modern Democracy* (OUP, Oxford, 1994), pp.100ff.

³ Brown, *Modern India*, pp. 100ff; R. Johnson, *British Imperialism* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2003), p. 11.

⁴ A. Webster, *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2006), p. 131.

businessmen, who wished to dictate imperial policy to serve their own selfish interests. The theory has been subjected to frequent criticism from those like Darwin who challenged the existence of a unified 'official mind' dictating decision-making, and claimed that as British policy was subject to a wide range of external pressures it lacked coherence and consistency. Others have supported this view by arguing that each of the large number of departments involved in imperial governance had its own views about the priorities of British policy which made it difficult for any one to impose its opinions, while Cain and Hopkins, and their followers, have claimed that the interaction between policy-makers and the representatives of high finance, provided the latter with an influential voice in decisions.⁵

Yet aspects of Robinson and Gallagher's arguments have endured and continue to provoke vigorous debate. Britain's ruling elite believed that its traditional sense of duty extended to the Empire, and that as representatives of a superior race and the leading great power, they were responsible for spreading their own version of civilisation around their imperial territories and ruling 'lesser races' in a benevolent fashion that would encourage local development. An important priority for imperial administrators was to provide good and efficient government that maintained law and order while also promoting economic prosperity.⁶ Enthusiasts for empire were regarded with some distaste by the aristocratic elite, who felt such people were often representatives of a vulgar middle class, while the plans they promoted invariably threatened to upset the equilibrium of imperial rule, as Salisbury felt about Milner, Chamberlain and Curzon.

Central to the 'official mind' argument, and an idea strongly supported by historians like Hyam,⁷ was that strategic considerations predominated in the formulation of British

⁵ R. Robinson & J. Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (Macmillan, London, 1981) passim, but especially pp. 19-26; P. Cain & A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914* (Longman, London, 1993); R. Hyam, 'The Primacy of Geo-Politics: The Dynamics of British Imperial Policy, 1763-1963' *JICH* 27 (1999), pp. 27-52, & 'The Colonial Office Mind, 1900-1914' *JICH* 8 (1979), pp. 30-55; Johnson, *British Imperialism*, pp. 39ff; P. Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy* (Fontana, London, 1981), pp. 50, 63ff; J. Darwin, 'Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion' *EHR* 112 (1997), pp. 614-642; T.G. Otte, 'The Foreign Office and Defence of Empire, 1856-1914' & G. Peden, 'The Treasury and Defence of Empire' in G. Kennedy, *Imperial Defence: The Old World Order 1856-1956* (Routledge, London, 2008), pp. 9-29 & 71-90; Z Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (CUP, Cambridge, 1969); Webster, *Rise of the British Empire*, passim.

⁶ P. Burroughs, 'Imperial Institutions and the Government of Empire' in A Porter (ed.) *The Oxford History of the British Empire Vol. III The 19th Century* (OUP, Oxford, 1999), pp. 170ff.

⁷ Hyam, 'Primacy of Geo-politics.'

imperial policy, an idea that provided a connecting link between the different approaches adopted for governing the different parts of the empire. Although 'imperial defence' was a fluid concept,⁸ both officials and the public were aware that the Empire was the primary source of Britain's strength, and therefore it was necessary to defend it at all costs. Imperial concerns exercised a dominating influence over British foreign policy, the overriding aim of which, especially under the tutelage of foreign secretaries like Lansdowne whose imperial experiences gave them a greater understanding of the strategic issues involved, became safeguarding imperial interests to reduce the burden of commitments that had to be actively defended. Securing existing interests, notably India and its lines of communication, compelled British expansion into Africa and the subsequent occupation of strategically important territories, such as Egypt and South Africa. Any threats, whether internal or external, to these regions especially, but equally in other imperial territories, had to be met adequately to ensure the maintenance of British prestige. The Empire also provided Britain with a useful resource, on which it could draw to enforce its hegemony within strategically important regions, or in support of wider policy objectives. As Salisbury noted, India served as a 'barrack in the Oriental seas' and its troops were frequently used after 1857 from East Africa to China in support of British policies. Similar demands were placed upon the self-governing colonies, although unlike India they could not be compelled to act, but the mere existence of such a large pool of resources acted as a forceful reminder to its rivals of British strength. Another consideration underlay British reliance on its empire; the desire to defend its interests at minimal expense. Garrisons were often only large enough to provide an obvious symbol of British power, and were used only in the direst emergencies.⁹ The costs of occupying India were imposed upon its taxpayers, while attempts to cajole the self-governing colonies into making greater contributions to imperial defence were frequent. Debate about the costs and benefits of the Empire has been especially contentious, with little agreement being reached between those who regard it as an expensive liability and others who see it as a valuable asset.¹⁰

⁸ G. Kennedy, 'Introduction: The Concept of Imperial Defence, 1856-1956' in Kennedy, *Imperial Defence*, pp. 1-8.

⁹ Burroughs, 'Imperial Institutions'; D. French, 'The British Army and the Empire, 1856-1956' in Kennedy (ed.), *Imperial Defence*, pp. 91-105.

¹⁰ See for example L.E. Davis & R.H. Huttenback, *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire* (CUP, Cambridge, 1986), pp. 145ff; P.K. O'Brien, 'The Costs and Benefits of British Imperialism' *P&P* 120 (1988), pp. 163-200; A. Offer, 'The British Empire, 1870-1914: A Waste of Money?' *Econ HR* 46 (1993), pp. 215-238; Peden, 'Treasury', pp. 71-75.

As Burroughs and Beynon have argued, ensuring the maintenance of security in their scattered possessions remained a priority for British governments, and thus they came to rely on their local representatives to implement policies designed to counter external threats or internal subversion.¹¹ The ‘men on the spot’ played a crucial role in communicating information on local conditions to their superiors in London, which proved vital in the policy-making process. Knowledge of the periphery was a valuable asset, often entitling proconsuls to a voice in decisions, as Minto and Kitchener demonstrated during the negotiation of the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907. Minto’s tenure in both Canada and India provides evidence to support the idea of ‘pragmatic imperialism.’ No pre-conceived plan for what a governor could achieve during his post had much hope of success in the fluid atmosphere of either a mature self-governing colony like Canada, or the frequently chaotic circumstances of India, where the unexpected outbreak of crises required the authorities to make immediate response. Minto was able to accommodate himself into this structure, as beyond a pragmatic notion that the Empire must be maintained and threats to its security must be countered, he had few fixed ideas on how it should be governed.

Britain’s pragmatic approach to governing its Empire was partly motivated by the sheer size of the task this entailed. ‘Diverse’ is a barely appropriate word to convey the range of territories, just as ‘complex’ does little justice to the task Britain’s administrators undertook in governing the Empire. From the developed urban economies of the self-governing colonies, to the turbulent mountains of India’s North West Frontier, to the expanses of the veldt, conditions and peoples varied enormously. The only principles vaguely applicable to imperial administration were that colonies should be governed in a manner suitable to, and appropriate for, local conditions, and that they could not be ruled from London, which ‘resulted, obviously, in a lack of uniformity throughout the Empire.’¹² Minto’s service in Ottawa and Calcutta allows him to be utilised as a means to consider the heterogeneity of the Empire, and the different methods employed in its administration. Historians have echoed the views expressed by contemporaries like Milner that the Empire could not be regarded as a coherent whole:

¹¹ J. Beynon, ‘Overlords of Empire? British “Proconsular Imperialism” in Comparative Perspective’ *JICH* 19 (1991), pp. 165-202; Burroughs, ‘Imperial Institutions.’

¹² R.F. Shinn Jr., *Arthur Berridale Keith 1879-1944: The Chief Ornament of Scottish Learning* (Aberdeen University Press, Aberdeen, 1990), p. 45.

I often wish that, when speaking of the British Empire...we could have two generally recognised appellations by which to distinguish the two widely different and indeed contrasted types of state of which the Empire is composed.¹³

Such heterogeneity has rendered the task of writing a coherent history of the whole Empire, already rendered challenging by its geographical and chronological scope, that much more difficult.¹⁴ The division of responsibility for the Empire within Whitehall, where India was treated as a separate entity, and the objections expressed by the self-governing colonies about being grouped together with the crown colonies under the Colonial Office umbrella, reflected such attitudes.¹⁵

It has been argued that Britain's formal Empire could be divided into two distinct spheres according not only to race, where the civilising mission for supposedly backward races was allegedly paramount as the settler colonies could be left to their own devices, but also by method of government. Although collaboration with influential local actors was an important consideration in both, these separate spheres can be categorised broadly as empire by consensus or coercion, and Minto's career provides a useful point of comparison between the two.¹⁶ The former, specifically the self-governing colonies like Canada, had been granted a significant degree of autonomy during the Victorian era, and their representative institutions exercised control over most aspects of domestic policy. Dependence on British support for defence and the conduct of external relations made these the Governor's main role, but it was becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between 'imperial' and domestic matters or persuade restless young nations to accept policies they did not believe to be in their interests. The tendency before 1914 was for increasing control over the former to shift to the colonies where only local issues were concerned, thus diluting further the Governor's already limited powers. Britain had to work together with its self-governing colonies to achieve its aims; they could not be forced to adopt any policies, as Chamberlain discovered to his frustration. The absence of any major potential threat to the security of British interests meant that only a symbolic imperial military presence was maintained, and responsibility for local defence was devolved to local authorities. Encouraging them to maintain their forces to an adequate

¹³ D.C.B. Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals* (Pimlico, London, 2003), pp. 19ff.

¹⁴ See the general histories by Hyam, Judd, Lloyd, Marshall or Porter.

¹⁵ J.A. Cross, 'The Colonial Office and the Dominions before 1914' *JCPS* 4 (1966), pp. 138-148.

¹⁶ J. Darwin, 'A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics' in J.M. Brown (ed.) *The Oxford History of the British Empire Vol. IV: The Twentieth Century* (OUP, Oxford, 1999), pp. 64-87.

standard or accept any wider role in imperial defence proved to be a particularly difficult role for Minto and provided a fertile source of friction with Laurier's government.

The 'coercive' Empire proved to be very different. Legislative bodies existed by 1914, but their powers were circumscribed, they were elected on a very narrow franchise, and very few contemporaries would have regarded them as presaging any move towards granting authority to India. Real power was vested in the Viceroy and his small Executive Council, backed by the presence of 225,000 British and Indian troops. The extent of Britain's possessions necessitated devolution of many powers to the provincial level and working with local collaborators, but unlike Canada, the Viceroy retained real authority; in Calcutta the monarch's representative ruled as well as reigned. Even here, however, the governor's powers were being eroded, albeit from the opposite direction, as the Secretary of State came to dominate the governing partnership. As long as the Viceroy was willing to accept this subordination the relationship would proceed amicably, but an independently-minded governor, an overly autocratic Indian secretary, or incumbents from opposite ends of the political spectrum often created tension, that at the worst extreme could render the government of India impossible. Little account was taken of local opinion, beyond consideration of the risk imposed by deliberately ignoring native susceptibilities, when implementing policies, and the vast military establishment retained responsibility for defending India against internal rebellion as well as external threats. The danger posed in both these areas, and the vast responsibilities entailed by ruling 300 million people, meant that except in the most serious emergencies, India was regarded as an entity distinct from the rest of the Empire, and the focus of its authorities had to be within its borders, rather than on any wider role.

Minto also held office at a time of emerging challenges to the Empire. He was appointed when popular belief in the strength of Britain's Empire was at its zenith, but this had begun to waver slightly in the early stages of his Canadian career, and was on the verge of shattering by the time of his departure from Calcutta. The celebrations of Victoria's Jubilee in 1897 were soon replaced by abject gloom; as Hyam argued 'pessimism became the all-pervasive and quintessential characteristic of Edwardian thinking about the Empire.'¹⁷ Pessimism reached its nadir during the Boer War, and the apparent displays of

¹⁷ R. Hyam, 'The British Empire in the Edwardian Era' in Brown (ed.) *OHBE IV*, p. 50.

vibrant popular imperialism that greeted even recoveries rather than real successes, such as Mafeking, were indications of relief rather than jubilation. Military setbacks exposed the alarming inadequacies of Britain's international position and led to campaigns to improve the 'efficiency' of the nation.¹⁸ Reform and readjustment followed as Britain attempted to stabilise its position, a process in which Minto was involved at several points. The breadth of the challenges Britain faced produced a diverse range of responses as the future of the Empire became a subject of intense public debate. 'New Imperialists,' most vividly represented by Chamberlain, viewed the Empire as the defining aspect of Britain's global position and felt that its development would serve to strengthen it. Efforts to achieve imperial federation were accelerated, but their hopes were frustrated by the failure to agree a coherent plan or attract Cabinet and imperial support for their objectives. Despite widespread popular appeal, little was achieved in defence terms beyond agreements on standardisation, while Chamberlain's fiscal policies succeeded only in hastening the collapse of Balfour's government and did little to improve his standing with the party grandees, who already disliked his middle class traits. The Liberals tried to move away from their predecessors' confrontational approach, believing this would do little to strengthen the Empire. Instead they moved towards conciliation, granting the Dominions greater control over their own affairs, and extending the principles of self-government to other colonies, notably India¹⁹

To meet the increasing challenges Britain faced, its military forces, both the army and navy, were reorganised and redistributed to make them more capable of meeting new threats from the continent, although the exact purpose of Haldane's Expeditionary Force or Fisher's plans remain a matter of some debate.²⁰ Foreign policy objectives were also re-

¹⁸ C. Bartlett, *Defence and Diplomacy* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1993), pp. 89ff; K. Jeffery, 'The Impact of the South African War on Imperial Defence' in D. Lowry (ed.), *The South African War Reappraised* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000), pp. 194-96; D. Judd & K. Surridge, *The Boer War* (John Murray, London, 2002); B. Nasson, *The South African War* (Arnold, London, 1999); G. Searle, "'National Efficiency" and the "Lessons" of the War' in D. Omissi & A. Thompson (eds.), *The Impact of the South African War* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 194-211; K. Wilson (ed.), *The International Impact of the Boer War* (Acumen, Chesham, 2001), pp. 158-167.

¹⁹ For a brief critique of the 'New Imperialists' see R. Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century 1815-1914*, (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 235-45 or B. Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-1996* (Longman, London, 1996), pp. 130-41, 196-99. For defence, see D.C. Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defence, 1870-1914* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1965) or Z. Steiner & K. Neilson, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 441ff.

²⁰ For the debate on the army see E. Spiers, 'Between the South African War and the First World War, 1902-1914' in H.F.A. Strachan (ed.), *Big Wars and Small Wars* (Routledge, London, 2006), pp. 21-36 or H.F.A. Strachan, 'The British Army, its General Staff and the Continental Commitment, 1904-1914' in D. French & B.H. Reid (eds.), *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation c. 1890-1939* (Frank Cass, London,

prioritised as Britain recognised the impossibility of defending its overextended commitments. In the context of Minto's career, diplomatic shifts in two areas proved significant, as he fought against the tide of changing British policy and tried to reconcile local interests with these dramatic shifts. Realignment in the Western Hemisphere predated the Boer War, as the Venezuelan crisis of 1895 had prompted a reconsideration of relations with America. Britain proved willing to concede regional hegemony to the US, realising that victory in any war would be virtually impossible, and that a process of rapprochement was the best way to economically defend its interests. Anxiety about the vulnerability of India's frontiers and the extent of resources that would have to be committed to their defence, convinced British planners that diplomacy was the only viable solution to the apparently intractable problems of Indian defence, thus prompting a lengthy effort to reach agreement with Russia, although this did little to ease the local difficulties caused by the warlike Pathans.²¹

How does Lord Minto fit into this changing historiographical context? In many ways he provides an interesting insight into the governance of Britain's Empire after its period of breathtaking expansion and at a time of mounting challenges to its existence, both from within and without. Previous historians' considerations of Minto's career illustrate Hopkins's arguments about the increasing specialisation of imperial history,²² where the focus is on a specific area with minimal effort devoted to linking local developments to a wider imperial whole. Most historians who have studied his career have done so in a local context, considering only the impact of his policies on the national development of Canada and India, rather than how far they were the result of wider imperial policy, neglecting the fact that no proconsul could govern his territory without reference to overarching imperial concerns. Minto's appointment to both posts represented a shift away from the brief flirtation with overzealous 'new imperialist' proconsuls towards those who approached their posts from a more pragmatic angle and tended to regard their duty as administering Britain's possessions rather than ruling them as personal fiefdoms. One result of this more

2002), pp. 75-94. For the navy see, N. Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1999).

²¹ For Anglo-American relations see A.P. Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (Routledge, London, 1995); C. Lowe & M. Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1972), pp. 96-106; A. Orde, *The Eclipse of Great Britain* (Macmillan, London, 1996), Ch. 1; B. Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement* (Gollancz, London, 1969), passim. For Anglo-Russian relations and their impact on defence see K. Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995), J. Gooch, *The Plans of War* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1974), or J. Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia* (IB Tauris, London, 2002).

²² A.G. Hopkins, 'Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History' *P&P* 164 (1999) pp. 198ff.

proactive approach towards imperial governance, as exercised by Curzon in India, was a determination in Britain to consolidate their control over events in the Empire, a trend that did much to curtail Minto's freedom of action. In some respects Minto was a typical proconsul; he came from an aristocratic background, and his family had a long tradition of serving the Empire. Like many of his contemporaries, Minto firmly believed in the Empire, and that it was the primary source of British strength, but he did not exhibit the almost religious intensity displayed by the likes of Curzon or Milner. It can be argued that while he approached his Canadian post determined to work towards achieving Chamberlain's aim of federation, experience soon disabused of him any notion that this could be achieved without the support of self-governing colonies. Indeed, Lloyd has argued that the appointment of men like Minto was necessary after the upheaval caused by the rule of the overzealous like Curzon, or the indolent like Aberdeen, to restore the Empire to its default state of normality.²³ While Salisbury described Curzon, Milner, Kitchener and Cromer as the 'satraps' of Empire,²⁴ and undoubtedly these four are for many historians the epitome of 'proconsular' imperialism, they do not represent the totality of Britain's imperial experience. In many respects they are the exceptions rather than the rule, whether in regards to the length of service, the proactive nature of their administration, or the challenges they created for themselves. Most governors aimed above all to maintain stability in their territories, and avoid causing trouble for their superiors. In this way it can be argued that those proconsuls, like Minto, Lansdowne, Grey, Elgin or Tennyson whose tenures did not embroil Britain in wars or end in bitter resignation or recrimination are the true representatives of imperial rule.

Minto's career can thus provide useful insight on the influence an imperial governor could exercise on the formation of British imperial defence and foreign policy during a period of great transition, and the evolution of this important role in two very different parts of the Empire before 1914. An examination of his relationships with his superiors and colleagues illuminates the pressures and challenges facing a governor in the Edwardian Empire, and how the idea of 'pragmatic imperialism' furthers understanding of the policies Britain adopted in response. Minto's career in both Canada and India is approached from three angles. 'Repairing the Damage' considers how predecessors were often the determining influence in shaping the parameters of any governor's tenure, and Minto was particularly afflicted in this regard, as the mistakes made by both Aberdeen and Curzon were to

²³ T.O. Lloyd, *Empire* (OUP, Oxford, 1996), p. 267.

²⁴ Beynon, 'Overlords of Empire', p. 165.

reverberate for the duration of his gubernatorial careers in Ottawa and Calcutta. The need to find a candidate suitably different from the current incumbents proved to be the deciding factor in the decision to appoint Minto to both posts. The process behind his appointment provides an opportunity to analyse the role of aristocracy in imperial governance, considering how they came to be regarded as particularly suited for the duties of the more prestigious appointments in India and the self-governing colonies as the Empire expanded. For Canada, Chamberlain was motivated by a desire to find a man who not only possessed a suitable reputation, but also shared his goal of strengthening Canadian support for the various methods he had conceived of tightening imperial links. Thus Minto's early months in Ottawa were dominated by the need to identify the areas where Aberdeen's influence had encouraged Canada's wish to ignore its wider imperial responsibilities, specifically plans for militia reform. Events around the Empire soon eradicated Aberdeen's legacy, but unfortunately in India the problems caused by his predecessor were to dominate his entire Viceroyalty. Balfour's disintegrating government's aim in appointing a replacement for their troublesome subordinate was to find someone capable of working in tandem with, rather than in opposition to, London to implement government policy, and restore the shattered harmony of India's government. Minto proved capable of the latter, but the legacy left by Curzon's attempts to rule India according to his own whims, particularly the unrest on supposedly pacified frontiers, occupied much of his attention and created much antagonism in relations with his superiors.

'Containing Unreality' focuses on Minto's relationship with his constitutional superiors, and the difficulties entailed by the local implementation of Britain's policies at the local level. In Canada, this proved to be a dual role. Minto undoubtedly supported Chamberlain's aim of federating the Empire, but his constant contact with all shades of Canadian opinion convinced him that the methods the Colonial Secretary adopted would only succeed in alienating the Dominion. His views on what could be achieved with the self-governing colonies had a profound influence on the path followed by 'new imperialism'. An equally important role here was persuading Laurier and his colleagues that Canada must accept its imperial responsibilities, and to act as the middle-man in the Anglo-American rapprochement, ensuring that both Ottawa and London understood the other's conceptions of the emergent relationship. In India, Minto's efforts were dominated by debates with Morley on the necessity for securing Britain's position on the frontiers, and it proved no less important for Minto to contain the unrealistic expectations of the

Liberals about the Empire. Morley's efforts were focussed on reforming Indian administration, but Minto believed that order and stability must be a prerequisite for any concessions. Rampant frontier lawlessness could not be tolerated and active precautions had to be taken to prevent its escalation. Concomitantly, and unsurprisingly given his background, throughout his career Minto remained reliant on military advice and deeply involved in military reforms. As is argued in 'Exploiting Solidarity' Minto, believing that Britain's imperial position was dependent on military power supported the efforts of his generals to strengthen local military forces. This stance created much tension with a Canadian government reluctant to commit any resources to its own defence let alone undertake any wider Imperial responsibilities. Ongoing debates about military reform contributed to Minto's maturation as a governor; he increasingly came to accept Canada's own conception of its defence requirements and worked to help implement Laurier's policy. Indian defence was a more pressing concern, and occupied much of the Viceroy's energies. Despite their opposition to rapprochement with Russia, Minto and Kitchener's input influenced many of the final terms of the agreement. Subsequently they focused on frustrating London's plans to use the new diplomatic climate to justify the reduction of Indian defence expenditure and the cancellation of Kitchener's reforms. Much was dependent on the issue, but throughout his gubernatorial career Minto worked hard to ensure his views were at least taken into account in the formulation of policy.

Britain's Aristocracy and the Empire

Debate over the 'imperial' shift in American policy has led to frequent comparisons with Britain's Empire, in an effort to use historical examples to understand modern events. In turn this has helped reinvigorate research into areas of British imperial history, particularly the governance of the Empire, recently engulfed by the focus on cultural aspects.²⁵ Ferguson and Porter have produced the most publicised contributions to the debate about British and American imperialism, and both paint remarkably similar pictures, agreeing on the similar motivations behind expansionist policies but also about the differences created by the vastly superior financial and military power currently available to the US. The emphasis placed on the absence of a 'ruling class' or an imperial 'ethos' in contemporary America is of particular importance in the context of Minto's career. America's failure to produce a generation of graduates willing to go to Iraq as proconsuls, or indeed to exhibit any desire to promote such beliefs, running counter as it does to an ingrained anti-imperialist philosophy, will prevent its 'empire' from becoming a directly governed territorial entity like that of Britain's.²⁶ In contrast, as imperial historians like Hyam stress, Britain's education system was geared specifically towards creating a 'caste' capable of ruling its extensive imperial territories. Britain's social elite was believed to be particularly suited for this task, and the aristocracy and upper classes, reflecting the control they exercised domestically, predominated in the higher echelons of imperial government. Inculcated with a belief in the civilising mission of Britain's Empire, many perceived it as a duty to work in its service to further Britain's global interests, although many were motivated by more materialist concerns, particularly the lack of opportunity created by changes in metropolitan British society.²⁷

Many influential historians have examined the role Britain's aristocracy played in governing the Empire, as well as other conservative institutions like the army and diplomatic service to emphasise the continuing influence they exercised, or otherwise, in

²⁵ R. Price, 'One Big Thing: Britain, its Empire and their Imperial Culture' *JBS* 45 (2006), p. 606.

²⁶ N. Ferguson, *Colossus* (Penguin, London, 2004); B. Porter, *Empire and Superempire* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2006). See also D. Kennedy, 'On the American Empire from a British Imperial Perspective' *IHR* 29 (2007), pp. 83-108 and C. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and its Predecessors* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2006).

²⁷ Ferguson, *Colossus*, pp. 201-226; Hyam, *Imperial Century*, pp. 282ff, 301ff; Porter, *Empire and Superempire*, passim.

Edwardian Britain.²⁸ Not all historians investigating Britain's imperial expansion agree with interpretations suggesting aristocratic dominance. Cain and Hopkins, challenging Robinson and Gallagher's 'official mind' thesis, argue instead for the existence of a 'gentlemanly capitalist' class created by the integration of the traditional landed ruling class and the burgeoning financial sector, as the power of the former declined. They claim that the common ethos of this group enabled it to dominate British imperial and economic policy to serve the interests of the City. Although influential, their ideas have provoked widespread criticism. Many have questioned the existence of a unified 'gentlemanly capitalist' class, which Cain and Hopkins failed to properly identify, and the extent of its influence on the formation of British policy beyond the purely economic sphere has become a contentious issue.²⁹

As part of their wider investigations into the position held by the 'ruling classes' in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, Cannadine and Adonis, although agreeing on certain points, have put forward conflicting arguments about the aristocracy's role in the Empire. Few peers volunteered to work in 'dangerous and inhospitable conditions' for unappealing salaries in the early 19th century, but imperial administration became a more attractive career for peers as the Empire underwent an expansion that coincided with a narrowing of opportunities for advancement elsewhere.³⁰ Changing conditions in, and attitudes towards, the Empire created a belief that rather than middle class professionals men of higher calibre were required for the more important self-governing colonies and India, where major policies had to be implemented or serious local crises erupted. But Ottawa or Calcutta needed men not only equal to the enormous workload, but also able to represent and symbolise the glory of the Empire. Many aristocrats had served imperial apprenticeships on gubernatorial staffs where they acquired experience of public life. Aristocrats had also gained skills through tradition and experience of similar ceremonial roles at local government level which gave them both the training and temperament for

²⁸ A. Adonis, *Making Aristocracy Work: The Peerage and the Political System in Britain 1884-1914* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993); D. Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1990); A. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (Croom Helm, London, 1981).

²⁹ Cain & Hopkins, *British Imperialism*; Darwin, 'Imperialism and the Victorians'; R.E. Dummett (ed.), *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism* (Longman, London, 1999); Hyam, 'Primacy of Geo-Politics'; R. Robinson & J. Gallagher, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade' *Economic History Review* 6 (1953), pp. 1-15 & *Africa and the Victorians*; W.R. Louis (ed.), *Imperialism: The Robinson-Gallagher Controversy* (New Viewpoints, New York, 1976); Webster, *Rise of the British Empire*, passim.

³⁰ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, p. 588.

ornamental positions. They had the 'habit of command and handling people.'³¹ Contemporaries and historians agreed that such roles were most appropriately filled by men of high status and illustrious lineage:

Here, where the paramount concern was to avoid offending the easily offended sensibilities of both emerging nationalists and imperial federationists, the need was for a distinguished and diplomatic peer, rather than an autocratic military officer.³²

Chamberlain put it more bluntly, 'the colonies were not content unless a person of high rank and remarkable distinction were appointed.'³³

Among those aristocrats who entered imperial service similar educational backgrounds at leading public schools and Oxbridge, (although very few were renowned scholars), military careers in elite regiments, connections to the unofficial power and policy-planning networks around London's clubs, created a caste mentality that manifested itself as a sense of superiority encouraging a belief in their predestined role as leaders.³⁴ Although there were some zealous proconsuls like Milner and Curzon, very few peers arrived with a sense of purpose or clear goals. Most retained a suspicion of the more idealistic approaches to imperial policy. Their imperialism was 'instinctive and unphilosophical', as Stevens and Saywell argue for Minto:

It represented stability and provided him with a sense of purpose and security. On the other hand he detested politics and politicians in the abstract at least, and was sceptical about the efficiency or soundness of the parliamentary democracy.³⁵

Dislike of democracy was widespread among certain elements of British society in the Edwardian era, and many imperial governors resented House of Commons interference in

³¹ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, pp. 420-429, 604.

³² R. Kubicek, *The Administration of Imperialism: Joseph Chamberlain at the Colonial Office* (Duke University Press, Durham, 1978), pp. 45ff. See also Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, p. 588ff.

³³ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, p. 589.

³⁴ A. Kirk-Greene, 'The Governors-General of Canada, 1867-1952: A Collective Profile' *JCS* 12 (1977), pp. 42-50.

³⁵ Quoted in Adonis, *Making Aristocracy Work*, p. 235.

the running of the Empire, believing such important issues had to be placed above the petty squabbling of partisan rivalry. Cannadine argues that genuine belief in the Empire and imperialism was a motivating factor for many aristocrats in their decision to accept imperial appointments. Further developing this argument in 'Ornamentalism,' he claims that the aristocracy used the Empire to perpetuate an image of traditional rural British society that was in retreat before 1914 and preserve traditional values from the evils of increasing industrialisation, urbanisation and capitalism. An Empire dominated by aristocrats and patricians became more hierarchical than the 'mother country', as this group transported their own attitudes and values round Britain's overseas possessions. Such attitudes proved particularly useful in India where they could be employed as a bulwark in support of the order established by the British by emphasising loyalty to the crown rather than the local government. Even Canada, which affected disdain for such aristocratic pretensions, placed the Governor General, as the monarch's representative, at the apex of a hierarchical society modelled on Britain's and which developed an exaggerated regard for British traditions as part of a strategy to define Canadian separateness vis-à-vis their more egalitarian southern neighbour.³⁶

Disagreement centres on the functions carried out by aristocratic proconsuls. Cannadine echoes Bright's oft-quoted view that the Empire existed merely as a gigantic system of outdoor relief for an impoverished aristocracy. With few opportunities available in Britain to those unconnected to ruling cliques, especially during the period of the 'Hotel Cecil,' the Empire offered new challenges to those who believed junior ministerial or even Cabinet careers had reached a dead end. Material considerations provided an incentive to accept highly paid imperial posts offering the chance to escape financial difficulties in Britain. Manifold other advantages beyond the salary accompanied high level imperial service. Governors often enjoyed a grander style of life than would have been possible when living in Britain. Huge staffs, palatial mansions, free transport and lavish entertainment allowances were some of the additional benefits accompanying prestigious and secure posts. Further lucrative employment opportunities were opened up on returning to Britain, from City directorships to chairmanships of royal commissions.³⁷ Cannadine argues that the aristocracy were ideal for such posts as they 'were social jobs rather than power positions,' and to illustrate his point he claims that 'even in India, the Viceroyalty itself

³⁶ D. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism* (Penguin, London, 2001), pp. 4-15, 27-57; D. Cannadine, 'Ornamentalism' *History Today* 51 (2001), pp. 12-19.

³⁷ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, pp. 208-209, 213-215, 594-599.

was a relatively undemanding job...' Appropriateness, experience and expertise paradoxically often counted for little in making appointments, and could prove to be a positive disadvantage. Cannadine argues that most Viceroys knew little about India before their arrival, and although Kirk-Greene stresses that not all of the Governors General were 'rank outsiders with no previous knowledge of Canada,' in Cannadine's view the general tendency was to appoint grandees with little relevant experience or qualifications; few had been proconsuls before. Equally few made the step-up from Canada to India, as the 'inflexible figure-head' required for the former was of little use in the latter.³⁸ High rank became more important than any remarkable distinction. Most aristocratic governors were not men of great ability. Almost uniformly undistinguished, few made any reputation for themselves beyond their temporary imperial homes. For Cannadine, Stanley, Governor General of Canada in the 1880s, was representative of aristocratic proconsuls: 'He was fat, lethargic, honourable, not too bright, uxorious, without high seriousness, but absolutely straight.'³⁹

Curzon developed a similarly dismissive view of his predecessor in India:

If a man like Lord Elgin – who had returned to what he was eminently fitted to be, a County Councillor in his Scotch town – could govern India successfully, there couldn't be much required to be a success.⁴⁰

Such appointments were not universally popular. Embittered Colonial service professionals, denied the opportunity to reach the apex of the system, bemoaned that 'untried and juvenile noblemen' received the prestige posts, appointed through a system of government patronage where family connections apparently counted for more than personal ability, 'selected rather for their coronets they have inherited than for any distinction they have gained.'⁴¹

Adonis adopts a different and more plausible viewpoint. He dismisses Cannadine's focus on the 'ornamental' nature of proconsular posts, which was used to illustrate an

³⁸ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, pp. 591-593; Kirk-Greene 'Governors-General', p. 50.

³⁹ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, p. 591.

⁴⁰ D. Gilmour, *Curzon* (John Murray, London, 1994), p. 222.

⁴¹ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, p. 589.

unconvincing argument about aristocratic decline and betrays a failure to properly understand the nature of imperial governance. Britain's aristocracy provided a pool of talent and knowledge on a range of issues which made them well-equipped to meet the demand created by the evolution of the self-governing colonies for a new type of governor, able to combine the roles of ambassador and constitutional monarch:

Of late years, there has been a strong tendency on the part of self-governing colonies to prefer great English noblemen with distinguished names and great fortunes, who will make Government House brilliant and attractive.⁴²

Fulfilling the dominions' desire to bask in the reflected glory of the nobility, together with the established practice of appointing peers to imperial ministerial offices, enabled the aristocracy to entrench itself in the higher reaches of the imperial service. Their role in governing the Empire made a 'significant contribution to the...self-image of the peerage as a governing elite.' Although many peers saw imperial service as a way to advance their own political careers, this rarely occurred, and senior imperial appointments provided an opportunity to maintain a position in the running of the Empire that may have otherwise been denied to them in the rapidly changing conditions of Britain.⁴³ Adonis's argument that the Governor had much greater powers of interference than a constitutional monarch, his interjections in Canadian politics remained significant and occasionally controversial,⁴⁴ is more convincing than Cannadine's claims that the Governor could never act as instigator or initiator as such ill-judged behaviour was guaranteed to threaten what was otherwise a non-contentious post.⁴⁵ Mere title was not enough for appointment to such posts. Instead of being 'plumage positions' much work was involved in imperial administration and several important functions had to be fulfilled; any appointee had to conform to minimum standards. For Adonis, occupying a post considered to be equal to Cabinet rank enabled most Viceroys to have a 'formative and often decisive influence' on the policies of the Raj. Governors in the settlement colonies had to act as constitutional monarchs, but had to exercise great tact to allow them to safeguard British interests, assist in the development of party political government, and promote imperial attitudes.⁴⁶

⁴² Adonis, *Making Aristocracy Work*, p. 211.

⁴³ Adonis, *Making Aristocracy Work*, pp. 212-214.

⁴⁴ Adonis, *Making Aristocracy Work*, p. 222.

⁴⁵ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, pp. 600-602.

⁴⁶ Adonis, *Making Aristocracy Work*, pp. 216-228.

Minto's career provides an interesting example of how Britain's aristocratic network operated, and the influence they retained. His position as a peer, attendance at prestigious educational institutions, commission in an elite regiment, military adventures across the Empire, and marriage to an aristocratic wife enabled him to establish contacts with various people in positions of power. Eventually these assisted him to gain some advancement, as men like Wolseley and Lansdowne, and connections within the royal court, supported his appointment to Ottawa. The experience gained there proved a useful qualification for promotion to Viceroy, but this appointment was also assisted by a close personal acquaintance with the then Secretary of State for India, Brodrick, which had been strengthened by their work on Canadian military issues. The fact that almost all the other seriously considered candidates for both posts were hereditary peers, illustrates that, for the Unionists at least, background was an important quality. Governments obviously looked for peers with similar political views when considering appointments to such important posts, and their benches in the Lords provided a plentiful supply of suitable candidates. Governors also relied on their contacts in Britain for support in the implementation of policies, even in India where they were surrounded by officials with similar outlooks. Minto turned to Brodrick in Canada to assist in his efforts to prevent the alteration of local military organisation, while in India he utilised the efforts of men like Roberts, and Bigge, who as George V's private secretary could mobilise some very influential voices against any Liberal policy perceived to pose a threat to the stability of the Raj. The Liberals began to affect slight changes, but even Hardinge, appointed to succeed Minto and who had amassed a wealth of professional experience, had close connections to the court.

Analysis of the roles played by Governors General and Viceroys, and the place they occupied within the imperial government serves to illustrate Adonis's argument about the functional purpose served by Britain's aristocracy. The continued presence of the Governor General at the apex of Canada's government after Confederation in 1867 has provoked in-depth study of the exact role he fulfilled, as the ambiguity inherent in Dominion status made it difficult to precisely define his sphere of action.⁴⁷ His powers decreased proportionately as the Dominion government expanded its areas of responsibility, but his entitlement to intervene on key issues meant that few incumbents passed their complete

⁴⁷ B.J. Messamore, "'On a Razor's Edge': The Canadian Governors-General 1888-1911" *BJCS* 13 (1998), p. 398.

terms without facing some controversy.⁴⁸ Nationalist historical criticism of the gubernatorial office and its occupants reflects Canada's belief that the imposition of aristocrats to 'rule' them implied some inferior position within the Empire, rather than that of 'senior Dominion', or that despite having been granted self-government, governors were part of an imperial conspiracy to eradicate their autonomy.⁴⁹ Little attention is paid to the contribution Governors made to Canada's political development,⁵⁰ and most are dismissed as 'nonentities, manifestly unsuitable or simply dull.'⁵¹ Criticising those sent to Ottawa in such terms, or considering what more zealous pro-consuls like Milner or Curzon would have made of the post, ignores the fact that although a prestigious office, the contradictions of the Governor's post and Canada's remoteness from the centre of imperial power, made it an unattractive proposition for the more ambitious.⁵² The absence of self-government in India removed any possible ambiguity about the Viceroy's role; he had a clearly defined and less contentious position as the active head of a complex system of Government, although criticism of the incumbents and their policies, rather than of the office, is a common thread in Indian historiography. Autocratic government provided wider scope for initiative and made the post more attractive for ambitious politicians. But the balance of power between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State was shifting by 1914. The British authorities found it increasingly difficult to find suitable candidates for all imperial positions, but were equally quick to complain when their policies were not implemented. Britain was becoming increasingly reluctant to appoint overzealous proconsuls liable to independent initiative. London, especially after Curzon's tenure in India, wanted men who would carry out policies with the minimum of fuss.

Fulfilling the numerous social functions incumbent on the monarch's representative was a duty common to both Governors and Viceroys. In India, the Viceroy was the centre of an energetic 'society,' and his annual tours were believed to be an advantageous way to let him see the Raj and vice versa, but they became an irritant for overworked proconsuls.⁵³ For Canada, such ceremonies served to strengthen imperial feeling by demonstrating the Governor's, and therefore Britain's, association with national life in the Dominion.

⁴⁸ R.M. Dawson, *Constitutional Issues in Canada 1900-1931* (OUP, London, 1933), pp. 65-66.

⁴⁹ Messamore, 'Razor's Edge', p. 376. Messamore actually supports Miller's dismissal of this argument.

⁵⁰ See for example K. McNaught, *The Penguin History of Canada* (Penguin, London, 1988); R.C. Brown, (ed.) *The Illustrated History of Canada* (Key Porter Books, Toronto, 2000).

⁵¹ G.F.G. Stanley, quoted by Kirk-Greene in 'Governors-General', p. 52.

⁵² Kirk-Greene, 'Governors-General', p. 53; NLS Arthur Elliot Papers MS 19476, Correspondence between Lord Minto and Arthur Elliot 1898 to 1901, A. Elliot to Minto, 10 November 1902, (unless otherwise stated all subsequent NLS references are to the papers of the 4th Earl of Minto).

⁵³ Gilmour, *Curzon*, pp. 204-222.

Aristocrats were believed to be particularly well suited to act as the 'nation's host,' evoking the traditions and grandeur of the mother country.⁵⁴ This social leadership role compensated for limited political functions, and could be used to focus attention on and promote neglected causes. Social duties emphasise for Cannadine the essence of the proconsular office – dignity and detachment; overall 'being was more important than doing.'⁵⁵ Yet Buchan, in a response to critics of the Governor's apparent indolence that became one of the most famous definitions of the office, argued that ceremony masked many anxieties and served a useful political purpose:

A Governor General lives an intricate and crowded life in the public eye. His mind may be absorbed in some grave discussions with his Ministers, or the Home Government, but he must present himself smiling at a dozen functions and let no one guess his preoccupation. He must perpetually entertain and be entertained. He must show interest in every form of public activity, from a charity bazaar to a university celebration; he must be accessible to all men that he may learn of them as they of him; he must visit every corner of his dominion, and become for the time being, not only one of its citizens, but by adoption a perfervid son of each town and province. These things are the imponderabilia of governorship not less important than a cool head and a sound judgement in the greater matters of policy, and many a man who is well fitted for the former duties fails signally in the latter.⁵⁶

Occupying Government House in either country was not solely about entertainment, lengthy tours to exotic princely states or frozen wilderness, or shooting local wildlife in large numbers. As Laurier put it, carefully balancing the contradictions by then inherent in the post:

The Canadian Governor General....long ago ceased to determine policy, but he is by no means, or need not be, the mere figurehead the public imagine. He has the privilege of advising his advisers, if he is a man of sense and experience, his advice is often taken. Much of his time may be consumed in laying corner-stones and listening to boring addresses, but corner-stones must be laid, and people like a touch of colour and ceremony in life.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Adonis, *Making Aristocracy Work*, p. 228.

⁵⁵ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, pp. 602-3.

⁵⁶ J. Buchan, *Lord Minto: A Memoir* (Thomas Nelson & Sons, London, 1924), p. 173.

⁵⁷ Buchan, *Lord Minto*, p. 122.

Colonial Governors had an important political function to fulfil, and while this was particularly and obviously true of India, it remained so in Canada, even if it seemed as though the powers associated with the post were disappearing before the incumbent's eyes. Despite the unstoppable advance of Canadian political autonomy, the Governor General 'contrived to remain a political necessity', though his role was narrowly circumscribed by ongoing Canadian constitutional evolution.⁵⁸ Lansdowne, serving in the 1880s, was the first of the new type of Governor, who, while perfectly able, was content not to interfere and use his influence in the background. This suited the Canadian government, but made things increasingly difficult for his successors, who faced constant accusations of interference.⁵⁹

It was a delicate position, not clearly outlined in any one piece of legislation. The British North America Act defined the Governor General as the representative in Canada of the monarch and their Government, the Chief Executive Officer and Administrator, vested with the powers, authorities and functions of the sovereign. Buchan emphasised the similarities between the two roles, arguing that

A Governor General in an autonomous Dominion walks inevitably on a razor's edge. His powers are like those of a constitutional monarch, brittle if too heavily pressed, a shadow if tactlessly advertised, substantial only when exercised discreetly in the background.⁶⁰

But the right to 'encourage, advise and warn' traditionally assigned to a constitutional monarch remained ill-defined, and it was never clear how far these could be taken in a self-governing colony,⁶¹ much depended on the individual and the issues he faced. Reigning but not governing, leading but not attempting to rule, this was the Governor's fate. Precedent and experience played an increasingly important role in defining the Governor's functions, which could pose problems for those, like Minto, unfortunate enough to succeed someone with very different conceptions of the office.

⁵⁸ Kirk-Greene, 'Governors-General', p. 35; P. Stevens & J.T. Saywell, *Lord Minto's Canadian Papers Vol. I* (hereafter cited as *LMCP I*) (The Champlain Society, Toronto, 1981), p. xxiii.

⁵⁹ G. Neuendorff, *Studies in the Evolution of Dominion Status* (Allen & Unwin, London, 1942), pp. 166, 179.

⁶⁰ Buchan, *Lord Minto*, p. 121.

⁶¹ C. Miller, *The Canadian Career of the Fourth Earl of Minto: The Education of a Viceroy* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, 1980), p. 53.

Canadian sovereignty over its domestic affairs circumscribed the Governor's influence in this sphere. Levels of interference depended on the personalities of the Governor and the Prime Minister, and the political circumstances facing the Government, as those in difficulty often welcomed intervention. By the 1890s gubernatorial advice was rarely sought here except in the most serious crises, making politicians unaccustomed to interference and disconcerting them when long dormant powers erupted, as Aberdeen discovered to his cost. The Governor's domestic role became more strategic than tactical, and he played an important part in the development of responsible government by tactfully ensuring that norms of constitutional practice were adhered to and attempting to restore stability by mediating in particularly bitter political disputes heightened by ethnic tension. Remaining impartial in such circumstances became vital, and although many faced criticism for partisanship or unwarranted interventions, most forgot personal political prejudices and put aside their distaste at having advisers lukewarm or opposed to the British connection more successfully than the Colonial Office, whose inclination to sympathise with the 'loyal' party was a fertile source of friction; Chamberlain in particular found it irksome to appear impartial with a Liberal government that looked askance at his imperialist schemes. Immersion in Dominion politics and society enabled the Governor to appreciate more the difficult circumstances faced by Canadian governments.⁶² Miller and Stevens emphasise that in the absence of official guidance the Governor's personal qualities became immensely important. The Governor was entitled to take a close interest in political events and be informed of important decisions or discuss proposals; this was an effective method of gaining ministerial confidence, the key to exercising gubernatorial influence. Knowledge of local circumstances, when combined with judgement and common sense could allow the Governor to become a powerful figure. Even Minto, whom both criticise severely, was able to express his opinions forcefully.⁶³

The road to a successful governorship could be perilous and required careful negotiation. In Buchan's view:

There have been many failures among those sent abroad to represent the British Crown, due largely to the narrowly circumscribed area from which they are

⁶² Neuendorff, *Evolution of Dominion Status*, pp. 19-20, 113-153, 137-188; Kirk-Greene 'Governors General', pp. 39-40; Messamore, 'Razor's Edge', pp. 377-380.

⁶³ Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 51-59; Stevens & Saywell (eds.), *LMCP I*, pp. xxv-xxvii.

chosen; but that does not derogate from the tremendous importance of the office or belittle the success of the rare few who have succeeded.⁶⁴

Although the Governor was increasingly sidelined, military, diplomatic or constitutional controversies could thrust the office into the limelight, while the resurgence of imperial fervour and unstable domestic politics invited gubernatorial involvement. As Aberdeen put it, the Governor may have been aloof from actual executive responsibility, but required a ceaseless, watchful readiness to take part.⁶⁵ The Governor had always to remember that Canada was exceptionally jealous of its hard-won autonomy, and increasingly resented even practical suggestions as unwarranted interference. Despite criticisms of the system, there was little desire for change. Laurier argued that it strengthened the ties binding Britain and Canada, keeping them constantly before the public while placing at the head of the administration a man unconnected with party or political differences, thus easing the evolution of self-government. But the greatest argument against any change was the fear of the unknown; in Laurier's view the system had 'worked harmoniously and satisfactorily, and any change...would not, I am sure, be productive of good results.'⁶⁶

How different the onerous responsibilities facing the Viceroy, a position distinct from and elevated above all others in the Empire, the head of its largest administration rather than a mere figurehead. Buchan emphasised the differences between the two posts:

In Canada Minto had learned the duty of a self-effacing governor, quick to understand the nuances of constitutionalism and exercising his power by suggestion and counsel. His new position was very different, for he was in a land remote from the forms and spirit of Western democracy, wielding through his Council an executive authority far greater than that of an ordinary monarch. His business was to govern as well as to reign...The position of a Viceroy is like that of a general.⁶⁷

Dilks's description provides some indication of the range of work facing the Viceroy:

⁶⁴ Buchan, *Lord Minto*, p. 122.

⁶⁵ Kirk-Greene, 'Governors-General', pp. 36-37; N Ward 'The Structure of Government' in J.M.S. Careless & R.C. Brown (eds.), *The Canadians 1867-1967* (Macmillan, Toronto, 1967), p. 720.

⁶⁶ Adonis, *Making Aristocracy Work*, p. 223.

⁶⁷ Buchan, *Lord Minto*, p. 215.

Correspondence with the home government about Aden, Persia, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Tibet and Siam came before the Viceroy in his capacity as head of the Foreign Department, which dealt also with the tumultuous affairs of the frontier and with the chiefs. As political head of the administration, he received hundreds of petitions upon every conceivable subject; dealt constantly with military questions, many of which had a bearing [on]....the politics of India; corresponded regularly with the Governors, Lieutenants-Governors and Chief Commissioners, with the Sovereign, the Secretary of State, and the Under-Secretary at the India Office. The Viceroy carried on all the ceremonial and social duties of a head of state, presided over the Council, saw his colleagues and the Secretary to each Department; in short, gave the administration its cohesion and direction.⁶⁸

The Viceroy's official life was unending, no escape could be found from the 'endless typhoon,'⁶⁹ of work. Files followed him on his tours around India and were often piled to the ceiling of his office, all requiring the closest attention and long hours of toil. Although firmly entrenched as the head of a complex Government, an image that was forcibly portrayed to the Raj, the Viceroy received support from various sources. A Private Secretary, usually a man of great Indian experience, acted as the principal adviser. The Executive Council acted as a Cabinet, dealing with every conceivable aspect of policy affecting India. Its members were responsible for their own departments, and as experienced Indian officials they could provide valuable advice for less knowledgeable Viceroys. Provincial governments exercised control over local affairs, provided these did not affect the wider interests of India, and therefore controversial subjects were best avoided. Legislative Councils existed at national and provincial levels, which had some elected members and could discuss certain issues, although these were strictly controlled by the Government of India. Undoubtedly the Government of India, however benevolent and beneficent, was an autocracy, in a form that even Curzon was surprised that the constitution permitted.⁷⁰

For all the scope and opportunity offered by the powers available to both Governors and Viceroys, they remained answerable to Parliament through their direct superiors in the

⁶⁸ D. Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. I* (Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1969), p. 73.

⁶⁹ Gilmour, *Curzon*, pp. 204-224.

⁷⁰ Gilmour, *Curzon*, pp. 149-163; H.V. Lovett, 'The Home Governments' and 'The Indian Governments', in H.H. Dodwell, (ed.) *The Cambridge History of the British Empire Vol. V The Indian Empire, 1858-1918* (CUP, Cambridge, 1932), pp. 206-225, 226-244.

Cabinet. Responsible for managing the Empire were the India Office and Colonial Office, two departments unique in Whitehall:

They had no special area of competence, but managed all the affairs – fiscal, economic, political and strategic – of great empires. Each was a Treasury, a Foreign Office, a War Office, a Home Office and a Board of Trade rolled into one.⁷¹

Canadian governments increasingly came to resent their inclusion under the remit of the Colonial Office and Secretary as an affront to their perceived status in the Empire. Many were annoyed that they were grouped together with non-white crown colonies, and that the Colonial Secretary's huge portfolio, covering all aspects of policy, from economic development to local military defence, in areas as diverse as East Africa and Australasia, prevented him from focusing his attention on the affairs of any one imperial possession. Insult was added by the lowly position he invariably occupied in the Cabinet, which was believed to minimise any influence self-governing colonies could have over British policy. Chamberlain proved the exception rather than the rule, and despite his prominent position, he was not universally popular in Canada, where even imperialists feared his plans threatened the Dominion's autonomy.

The permanent officials of the Colonial Office were equally unloved, paradoxically facing criticism for lacking knowledge of, or interest in Canadian affairs, as well as for overenthusiastic imperialism and interference inappropriate for responsible government. Self-conscious dominion nationalism was fuelled by the undue influence assigned to private correspondence with the Governor General, which was believed to enforce the inferior status of the Canadian Prime Minister, and a perceived failure to appreciate Canadian viewpoints. Unsurprisingly politicians began to lobby for the creation of a separate department responsible for Dominion affairs.⁷² Governors often arrived imbued with a typical metropolitan attitude of superiority, but immersion in Canadian society encouraged identification with local viewpoints, and led to frequent complaints about British insularity. The Governor was valued as a bridge between opposing opinions, and he could make important suggestions on imperial matters. But Britain increasingly came to

⁷¹ Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. I*, p. 97.

⁷² Cross, 'Colonial Office and the Dominions before 1914', pp. 138-148'

believe that the Governor was too close to the problems to see them in a proper imperial setting and could not be considered a good judge of imperial interests as a whole. Direct cultivation of leading colonial politicians, for example through Borden's visit to the CID in 1904, was believed to work better than indirect pressure through the Governor.⁷³

Dominion autonomy and control over internal affairs lessened Colonial Office interference to an extent, but not so for India. Despite the power apparently vested in the Viceroy, and the claims made by Curzon that the Viceroy and Secretary of State for India were two constitutional allies, there was no doubt in Whitehall where the ultimate responsibility lay:

[the Viceroy] is in many respects an independent sovereign; but the essential fact is that he is the representative of His Majesty's Government in India, and the channel by means of which the views of the Government – and through them the House of Commons, who are our real masters – find their expression in India.⁷⁴

Technological change had steadily eroded Viceregal independence. Completion of the telegraph link between Britain and India meant that the Secretary of State 'could thus less than ever be confronted with accomplished facts.'⁷⁵ Cases in which the final decision rested with the Viceroy became fewer in number, and all important decisions, unless vitally urgent, had to be referred to London for approval. The India Office was a far more prestigious ministerial portfolio than that at the Colonial Office, more senior and experienced politicians tended to be appointed, and it offered much wider scope for action, responsible as it was for the vast domain of India, without the tedious intermediation of local legislatures. Although the post-Mutiny settlement was based on the principle that 'the government of India must be, on the whole carried out in India itself,'⁷⁶ minimising interference as much as possible, a large amount of business had to be transacted in Britain to ensure that parliament retained responsibility for administration of India. While the Viceroy protested that the 'man on the spot' must have control over events in India, as Curzon said 'you cannot treat the Government of three hundred million of people as though it were a subordinate department,'⁷⁷ interference from London increased

⁷³ Neuendorff, *Evolution of Dominion Status*, pp. 42-109.

⁷⁴ Arthur Godley, Permanent Under-Secretary at the India Office, quoted in Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. I*, p. 105.

⁷⁵ Lovett, 'The Home Governments', p. 214.

⁷⁶ Lovett, 'The Home Governments', p. 211.

⁷⁷ Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. I*, p. 113.

exponentially during the 19th Century. Lack of parliamentary interest in India, a common Viceregal complaint, and Cabinet preoccupation elsewhere gave the Secretary of State more of a free hand, and consequently they 'became more absolute.'⁷⁸ Disputes over where the real authority over India lay became more frequent, embittered by personality clashes, and by the time of Minto's appointment, the India Office had done much to establish its superiority over Calcutta, desperate to prevent a repeat of the danger caused by Curzon's attempts to run India as his own personal fiefdom. By this time the Viceroy had come to be regarded as the 'agent of [their] own political aspirations' by the British government.⁷⁹

Imperial issues provided an arena for the Governor to take positive action and have some influence over the formation of policy, particularly if they believed defence was being neglected or foreign relations adversely affected. As Miller argues, however, the line dividing Canadian and imperial interests was hazy and ill-defined, and it took much gubernatorial skill to defend the rights and interests of the imperial government, reconcile the conflicting interests and demands of two masters, and avoid accusations of interference with Dominion autonomy.⁸⁰ Strengthening latent imperial sentiment and advising on the best methods of utilising the previously untapped reservoir of imperial feeling, increasingly came to occupy the Governor's attention. Playing the role of mediator, the Governor General could help Canadians appreciate imperial viewpoints and realise that their attitudes were known and understood in Britain.

Defence policy was a key source of tension in the imperial relationship, and here the Governor fulfilled two key functions. Firstly he attempted to smooth relations between the British officers commanding Canada's militia which were a source of endemic friction, which related to the Governor's second duty. He could exercise his influence to encourage the Dominion Government to undertake greater responsibilities for Canadian and imperial defence and assign a higher priority to military preparedness, but he also had to advise his British superiors about the obstacles to achieving imperial goals posed by Canadian attitudes. Both Minto and Grey tried to inculcate a sense of commitment to imperial defence with limited success. Canada often only agreed to such policies to preserve their precious national autonomy, and both Governors faced criticism for pressuring the

⁷⁸ Lovett 'The Home Governments', p.222.

⁷⁹ M. Gilbert, *Servant of India* (Longman, London, 1966), pp. 3-4.

⁸⁰ Miller, *Canadian Career*, p. 53.

Canadian Government to make greater contributions, something they remained reluctant to do until Borden's election victory in 1911. Given Canadian proximity to the US, foreign policy was another important role for the Governor. Without diplomatic representation and unable to formulate its own foreign policy, the Dominion relied on the Governor to act as an unofficial ambassador and represent their viewpoints to London and Washington. External affairs often forced him to balance the demands of two masters as he was in a unique position to act as 'an on-the spot apologist for imperial policy' or to champion Canadian interests when they appeared to be neglected. But this was an anxious and responsible duty, and Britain's desire to resolve outstanding grievances with America often put the Governor in an awkward position. The Foreign Office had become jealous of its sphere of control and was reluctant to relinquish any aspect of responsibility to a non-expert agency outside its jurisdiction beyond the unofficial level. Both Minto and Grey adopted conscious policies to achieve rapprochement, but the Governor increasingly had to assuage bitter complaints that Canadian interests were being sacrificed for the 'false idol' of Anglo-American friendship, something that occupied much of Minto's time during the Alaska dispute.⁸¹

Theoretically India retained absolute control over both its foreign and military policy. The Viceroy had almost exclusive responsibility for India's Foreign Department, conducting correspondence with neighbouring states, keeping Britain informed of questions of wider policy connected with India and supervising the affairs of native states. But in practice this was increasingly eroded by the expansion of British interests and the belief in Whitehall that power be vested there. Only British officials were believed to be capable of seeing the Empire as an interconnected whole. Jurisdictions between Calcutta and Whitehall conflicted and interests overlapped, fuelling fears that the parochial outlook of India's government (echoing concerns raised about Canada) would conflict with the wider aims of British imperial policy, by damaging relations with Russia through apparently expansionist intentions in India's buffer states. As Dilks put it 'a rash move in Persia or Afghanistan, it was believed, might mean war with Russia.'⁸² Serious problems arose with the Foreign Office, reaching their zenith during Curzon's attempts to secure India's frontiers, provoking Morley to issue a forceful reminder to Minto during the negotiation of the Anglo-Russian Convention that the Empire could not have two foreign policies. Military

⁸¹ Neuendorff, *Evolution of Dominion Status*, pp., 30, 105-109, 113-153, 137-188 ; Messamore, 'Razor's Edge', pp. 380-389.

⁸² Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. I*, p. 111.

authority rested on firmer foundations. The Viceroy was usually blessed with more reliable military advisers than the Governor General in Canada, and was ultimately responsible for the policy, strategy, and welfare of an enormous force. Commander in Chief of the Army in India was a prestigious appointment attracting the highest calibre of soldiers. Complete control over the Army in India was vested within the Government of India, although the subdivision between the Military Department and Headquarters was to be a source of friction, especially between Kitchener and Curzon. India's sheer scale, constituting an Empire in its own right, and the number of potential threats it faced both within and on its borders necessitated granting control over defence policy to the local expert authorities.

A Reassessment of Lord Minto

Most of the proconsuls who served across Britain's vast Empire have disappeared into relative obscurity. Only the few who went on to greater things, who served in important territories, or whose tenures were marked by memorable events, are remembered to the extent that historians believe they warrant investigation. Minto is on the fringes of this group, mostly recalled for the eponymous constitutional reforms introduced in partnership with Morley while Viceroy of India, which even merit brief mention in the popular histories of the Empire:

Curzon's successor as Viceroy, Lord Minto, saw his role less as a proconsul than a civil servant, and together with Morley he attempted to extend legislative and administrative powers to Indians. Not much headway was made, partly because these well-intentioned Liberal gradualists met opposition from both Indian nationalists and from Tory British diehards.⁸³

One complete biography was written, but its hagiographical tone raised the ire of many critics, and it was later dismissed by its distinguished author as a 'perfunctory' effort.⁸⁴ Reflecting wider trends within the study of Britain's Empire, the investigations of modern historians became increasingly critical, desperate to ascribe the initiative for any achievements to Minto's colleagues.

As he admitted himself Gilbert Elliot, 4th Earl of Minto, was a rather unlikely candidate to hold two of the most prestigious posts in the British Empire. The family, descended from Border reivers, had a long tradition of service, most famously the 1st Earl, who had been Viceroy of India in the early 19th Century. He was granted his title as a reward and remained an example for successive generations, although few came close to matching his achievements. Attending Eton, Gilbert discovered under the tutelage of his master Warre, who believed that a public school education should create well-rounded young gentlemen, that his talents were on the sports field rather than in the class room. An undistinguished academic record did not preclude graduation from Cambridge, where his focus had been on social events and further development of his athletic prowess, particularly in riding. This

⁸³ A.N. Wilson, *After the Victorians* (Hutchison, London, 2005), p. 51; C. Lee *This Sceptred Isle: Empire* (BBC Books, London, 2005), p. 220 provides a more accurate account.

⁸⁴ Buchan, *Lord Minto*, passim; Miller, *Canadian Career*, p. 2; OD Skelton, 'Review of Lord Minto: A Memoir by John Buchan' *CHR* 6 (1925), pp. 64-68.

lack of achievement mattered little, as Gilbert's career had already been chosen. In 1867 a commission was purchased in the elite Scots Guards regiment, but his formal military career came to little. For a variety of reasons, including the boredom of military routine, the cost of a junior officer's social life, and an unfortunate altercation with a superior over a woman, he resigned his commission.

For many years, Lord Melgund's (as he was styled before inheriting his father's title) career lacked direction. For several years, much to his family's consternation, he was a moderately successful 'gentleman jockey' determined to avoid any attempts to force him into a more suitable occupation. Melgund's continued fascination with military affairs did provide some sense of purpose, and his efforts to promote interest in the mounted infantry combined with a series of military adventures across Europe to bring him to the notice of men in important positions, notably Wolseley. If it could not at this stage procure permanent employment, an aristocratic background did provide useful connections. In the 1870s it helped Melgund secure postings as a war correspondent in the Paris Commune, the Carlist Wars in Spain, and the Russo-Turkish war, before he was appointed as ADC to Roberts in Afghanistan, where his decision to reject the offer to join Cavagnari's ill-fated mission to Kabul proved wise. In 1882 he served in a similar position with Wolseley in Egypt after Gladstone's recognition of Transvaal independence following Majuba Hill had denied him the opportunity to serve in South Africa. These years shaped Melgund's life and outlook in many ways. In practical terms it led to an offer from Lord Lansdowne to serve as his Military Secretary in Canada, which although relatively unimportant, was seen as a stepping-stone towards further advancement, and provided some stability after his recent marriage (which would eventually produce five children). These formative post-University years had also done much to mould his political beliefs. He had been brought up in an atmosphere where family ties and connections were thought to guarantee advancement. But society had changed, and Melgund came to resent those who, he believed, had blocked his ambitions, namely politicians. The exciting and manly world of the military proved more appealing to the young aristocrat, but continued exposure to soldiers' ideas did much to buttress his own prejudices. First-hand experience of the consequences of political procrastination confirmed his opinions that a parliamentary democracy could not be trusted to run Britain's Empire. Only those who experienced hardship and risk on its dangerous frontiers, without thought of material gain, as opposed to self-interested politicians, could truly be classed as patriots and servants of the state. Although his views matured during his service as an administrator, such ideas stayed with

him throughout his imperial career; he retained a suspicion and dislike of politics and often turned to military colleagues for advice, invariably supporting them in struggles with politicians.⁸⁵

Like many other proconsuls, Melgund served an apprenticeship before advancing to more responsible positions. Time spent as an ADC or on gubernatorial staff was believed to provide valuable experience by exposing young aristocrats to the running of an Empire and enabling them to establish useful contacts. As Miller argues, Melgund's time in Canada from 1883-85, with the duties he undertook, his interaction with local power brokers, and the challenges he confronted, proved to be of great value.⁸⁶ The increased powers granted to the dominion government after Confederation had reduced the responsibilities of the Military Secretary, as authority over the militia had been devolved from the Governor to the Minister. The duties had become focused on arranging the Governor's ceremonial and social routine, and were thus less than onerous. But Melgund did have some more important concerns. He was responsible for protecting Lansdowne's safety, which due to his Irish experiences was believed to be under threat from Fenian terrorists. Both local Canadian and wider imperial defence issues occupied his attention. At Wolseley's request, and after consultation with Macdonald, Melgund coordinated the recruitment of a contingent for service on the Nile. Success here led the Dominion government to appoint him to a committee investigating Canadian coastal defence. This increased his knowledge of the militia and Canadian politics, as well as the confidence of Macdonald's government in his abilities, which subsequently requested his assistance in the production of defensive plans. Some tensions arose over later attempts to raise Canadian troops for imperial service that proved to be an interesting precursor of his future career. The most notable event of his time in Canada was his service in the North West Rebellion in 1885. Doubts about the capabilities of Middleton, the GOC, led the government to insist on Melgund's appointment to the force raised to quell the unrest. He provided useful assistance and advice for the general, and saw action in several engagements before being despatched to Ottawa to report on the campaign. His decision to return to Britain a few months later caused friction with Lansdowne, but the government was sorry to see him go and he had learned much about Canada's people and politics that would stand him in good stead for the future.

⁸⁵ For a balanced, though critical, account of the early stages of Minto's life, see Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 7-23.

⁸⁶ For paragraph Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 24-39.

More time elapsed between the completion of this post and the fulfilment of his ambition to serve in a more influential post than Melgund desired. He dabbled in politics for a time, as Gladstone's Irish policies, which Melgund, like many others, perceived to pose a threat to imperial integrity, completed his alienation from the Liberal views with which he had been inculcated as a youth and confirmed him as a Unionist. His one stand for election as an MP in 1886 ended in defeat, much to his relief, although he continued to work for party interests. Accession to his father's title brought elevation to the Lords in 1892, but the chances for appointment had temporarily disappeared with the Liberals' election victory. This enabled him to fulfil his traditional aristocratic duties, managing his newly inherited estate, engaging with local issues, and commanding the Volunteer brigade. This latter concern provided the opportunity to maintain his military interests, and he retained some influence with the War Office, acting as an unofficial spokesman in the Lords. The return of a Unionist government in 1895 still provided no advancement despite his best efforts.⁸⁷

Minto became focused on the possibility of obtaining the Canadian Governor Generalship, and seized his opportunity when it became obvious that Aberdeen's retirement was imminent. Although his previous experience provided a good claim, Minto needed the support of his influential friends, notably Lansdowne, Brodrick and Wolseley, as well as his wife's royal connections (the court was anxious to restore social propriety to Ottawa after Lady Aberdeen's antics),⁸⁸ to guarantee his appointment when he was not the first choice of those ultimately responsible. At 54, Minto's imperial career had started somewhat later than he had hoped, and this perhaps explains his determination to make the most of his position. His predecessor's time had been dominated by domestic issues, and many believed the official powers of the Governor to be waning as Canada advanced towards nationhood. The dominance of imperial issues during Minto's tenure provided the opportunity to use the Governor's powers to their fullest extent, and thus his career remains a source of controversy for Canadian historians. The debate about Canadian participation in the Boer War came to be a defining event in this respect. It also raised questions about the role the self-governing colonies could fulfil in imperial defence. Minto played an indirect role in the government's final decision, reminding Laurier of Canada's responsibilities towards the Empire, and his government's responsibilities towards their

⁸⁷ Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 39-47.

⁸⁸ Miller, *Canadian Career*, p. 48.

electorate. He remained involved in the organisation of the contingents, and took a paternal interest in the welfare of the Canadian troops, making great efforts to ensure that their services received proper recognition. The Boer War came to symbolise the imperial and defence issues that became a common theme during the remainder his career.

As the representative of the British government in Canada, Minto played an important role both in explaining their policies to Ottawa, as well as providing his views about Laurier's attitudes and Canadian opinion to his superiors. This proved particularly important for Chamberlain's attempts during and after the Boer War to strengthen the bonds of Empire by creating centralised federal institutions and persuading the self-governing colonies to accept greater defensive responsibilities. Minto's extensive investigations of Canadian views on this subject led him to encourage Chamberlain to focus on economic links as a more productive approach to achieving his aims. Alleviating civil-military tensions by eradicating corruption and political interference from the militia also occupied much of his attention. Minto was unable to prevent the removals of two GOCs, Hutton and Dundonald in 1900 and 1904 respectively, and the events surrounding their departures damaged his relations with Laurier's government. He worked hard to properly define the relationship between GOC and the Minister of Militia, and to retain some measure of imperial influence over Canadian defence policy. Minto could not prevent the alteration of the Militia Act in 1904 to allow the appointment of a Canadian GOC, but he recognised the trend towards increasing Dominion control in this respect, and used his influence with the War Office to secure the appointment of an officer favourable to the Canadians.

Anglo-American relations were another important consideration for Minto during his time in Canada. The attempts to resolve potentially troublesome issues, particularly the Alaska Boundary dispute, ensured that these remained tense until his departure. Although he did not share the views fashionable at the time about the prospects for Anglo-Saxon harmony, and frequently expressed his annoyance at American behaviour and attitudes in private, he recognised the importance of improving relations and expounded much energy to fulfil his gubernatorial duty of preventing Canada from obstructing attempts to reach rapprochement. Much energy was expended explaining British policies to Laurier's government and persuading them to accept various plans put forward to solve outstanding difficulties, while in return he conscientiously voiced Canadian objections to any unacceptable proposals, and supported them vociferously when they were treated unfairly.

After the unfavourable decision of the tribunal in October 1903, Minto tried to assuage Canadian fury at the perceived sacrifice of their interests, and he was heartily glad that the issue gradually faded into the background during the latter stages of his tenure.

Although these major difficulties arose frequently during his time in Canada, as Governor Minto was involved in various other issues. Much of his time was occupied by the social and ceremonial duties central to the post. Criticisms were voiced that Minto was the very image of a stiff and aloof aristocrat, but he exhibited an infectious enthusiasm for subjects that interested him, and many contemporaries were surprised to discover he was actually quite approachable.⁸⁹ His innate bravery did much to endear him to Canadians, particularly his daring rescue of a stranded fireman during the great Ottawa blaze. Minto travelled across most of the Dominion, visiting many towns en route. He particularly enjoyed touring places that brought back memories of his service in 1885 and the far north-west, where after listening to the grievances of locals he tried to persuade the government to improve local administration. Protecting the cultures of Canada's first nations against government interference became a particular interest. He regularly gave speeches to, and attended the functions of, institutions and societies in Canada's major cities. Engagement with emerging Canadian culture was another important duty; he attended art exhibitions and concerts, and encouraged the preservation of Canada's heritage by advocating the protection of historical sites like the Plains of Abraham and plans to establish a national archive. Charitable patronage was another significant role, and as well as his work during the Boer War, he and his wife helped to establish cottage hospitals for remote areas, and a foundation for respiratory diseases. Canada also provided many opportunities for Minto to indulge his passion for participating in, and watching, sport. Although he faced criticism for his imperialist policies, such views were in the minority; Minto departed from Canada in late 1904 a popular figure receiving widespread praise for his engagement with local customs and politics, and his efforts to restore Canadian links with the Empire.

Like most proconsuls, Minto's ambition was to become Viceroy; this was the apex of imperial government and the logical progression after Ottawa. Such hopes had faded after the extension of Curzon's tenure, and were deflated further by the instability of Balfour's government, which threatened to collapse at any time during 1905 and thus end his hopes

⁸⁹ Stevens & Saywell (eds.), *LMCP I*, pp. xx-xxii.

of preferment. Luck proved to be on Minto's side. Curzon's relations with London strained to breaking point over Tibetan policy and his dispute with Kitchener, and the temperamental Viceroy finally resigned in August 1905. With the preferred candidates either unwilling or unable to accept the post, Minto's Canadian experience made him the best alternative, and in one of his final significant acts before resignation Balfour appointed him as the new Viceroy. Aged 60, he was twenty years older than his predecessor had been on appointment. Some concerns were raised about his capacity for the gruelling task ahead, but he remained very physically fit, and his athleticism had surprised many in Canada. In temperament, he was ideally suited. Amenable where Curzon had been abrasive, Minto was capable of working with difficult colleagues to get policies implemented while avoiding friction, but could also provide firm leadership when necessary. Not an intellectual by any means, especially in comparison to Curzon or Morley, Minto was capable of astute analysis of issues based on his own observation. He had learned from his Canadian experience that imperial government worked best as a consensual exercise, a useful lesson for the situation he encountered upon arrival. Indeed, one of the reasons for his appointment had been to restore tranquillity to a disturbed India. Although he established himself as head of the Government of India, Minto was far more approachable than his predecessor, and he proved willing to take advice from officials and meet with leaders of Indian opinion. Social events and tours were again a regular part of Viceregal routine, but the actual work of governing India was far more involved and during his five years in office Minto encountered a wide range of challenges, not least of which was working with the oversensitive Morley as Secretary of State for India, a man at the opposite end of the political spectrum.

Indian opinion had been outraged by Curzon's decision to partition Bengal, and the measure had provoked widespread agitation and unrest that was to persist throughout his tenure. In a classic example of metropolitan-periphery tension, it produced much friction between Minto and Morley, who held conflicting views on the best way to approach the situation. Morley was adamant that redressing grievances and making concessions to Indian opinion, such as the introduction of a small measure of self-government, was the only way to maintain stability. Minto agreed with the ends but not the means, and he argued consistently that as 'man on the spot' he was the best judge of the situation. In his view, any concessions granted without the restoration of order would be taken as weakness and only encourage further unrest; agitation and violence had to be suppressed with a firm hand and rewards had to be earned by peace and loyalty. Interference with the Indian

Army, the foundation of British rule, and about whom any hint of disloyalty provoked paranoia amongst the Government, combined with a series of terrorist 'outrages' to justify their worst fears about the spread of sedition. As a result an uneasy compromise was adopted to solve the problem. A series of repressive measures, to prevent the worst excesses of the seditious press, restrict access to firearms and explosives, and imposing harsh penalties such as deportation on agitators was introduced to curtail extremism. At the same time the famous reforms were implemented, increasing Indian representation on the legislative and executive councils, and introducing the spirit, if not the letter, of democracy to India.

Internal unrest was not the only threat to concern India's rulers. Changes in British foreign policy aimed to eliminate the major threat to the security of India's frontiers by reaching rapprochement with Russia on their respective spheres of influence in Central Asia in August 1907. Although they objected in principle to the proposed agreement, Simla's views on the terms needed to protect Indian security were taken into account during the negotiations. Minto had supported Kitchener's plans to reform the Army in India, and he continued to back the c-in-c against Morley's efforts to use the agreement to justify not only halting these schemes, but also to reduce the levels of troops in India. Curzon's claims that his much-vaunted reforms had supposedly brought unprecedented peace and tranquillity to the chronically unstable region proved unfounded. Like most Viceroys, Minto thus had to deal with the ever-present danger of frontier unrest. Minto's attempts to stabilise relations with Afghanistan proved fruitful in some respects, but could do little to restrain the tribes. Minto therefore faced another prolonged struggle to persuade Morley that tribal lawlessness could not go unpunished, and that some military response to unrest was vital. These problems came to a head in February 1908, when it became necessary to despatch a military expedition to the frontier. Only swift action prevented these troubles from escalating a few months later, but it was never possible to pacify the whole province. Minto also successfully persuaded Morley, though not without difficulty, that some measures had to be taken to prevent the tribes obtaining the modern weaponry that was fuelling their criminality and providing the means to challenge the authorities, and a blockade was implemented in late 1909. Difficulties were also encountered on the other frontier, as China attempted to reassert its authority in Tibet and make claims in Burma, another legacy of Curzon's aggressive policies.

Minto suffered by comparison with his dynamic predecessor, but the India he bestowed to Hardinge was an oasis of calm compared with the powder keg he had inherited in 1905. He may not have been the most illustrious of Viceroy, but Minto had been appointed to restore stability to India, and achieved that difficult task as far as was possible in the poisoned atmosphere created by Curzon's policies. He was rightly praised for his efforts, and many were sorry to see him depart Simla. Advanced in years, suffering the strain of prolonged hard work in a punishing climate, and sitting on the opposition benches in the Lords, Minto did not have the opportunity to exercise great influence in British politics on his return. He still retained an interest in both Canada and India and his advice was occasionally sought on matters relating to them. He returned to manage his Border estates, but his health soon deteriorated, and he died after a short illness in early 1914, mourned by many of his former subjects.

Minto's appointment to the two most important posts in the imperial government, when many criticised him as being unsuitable or unqualified, makes him an ideal vehicle for studying British attitudes towards its Empire, and the methods they adopted for running such an apparently unwieldy entity during a period of dramatic reorientation in foreign and defence policy. It is an opportunity which earlier scholars ignored, bound by the restrictive climate of imperial history. The few who investigated Minto's career did so either only from a Canadian or Indian perspective resolutely refusing to acknowledge the British contribution. The nationalist or anti-British prejudices incumbent on such approaches, which made it necessary to criticise every move made by Britain's representatives unless perceived to be motivated by a benevolent desire to devolve power to oppressed imperial peoples, precluded considering his career in a wider imperial context or utilising the chance provided to compare how Britain governed the diverse territories comprising its Empire. Further shifts in imperial historiography, away from the more perceptible topics of political and military history, towards more abstract ideas about 'culture,' led many historians, influenced by literary theory and social science methodology, to attack more traditional approaches as unfashionable and likely to shed little light on the Empire.

Much Canadian writing about its imperial relationship with Britain is infused with resentment of the humiliation implied by such subordination, believed to be unfitting for an emerging nation. Indeed, the development of Canadian nationhood is an obsession for

Canadian historians, despite attempts to restore Britain to the centrality it warrants,⁹⁰ and it is in such light the careers of its Governors have been examined. As Minto's career coincided with a key period in Canada's transition away from colonial status and the refashioning of Britain's relations with America, it has been the subject of some consideration.⁹¹ These studies illustrate the trend towards nationalist dominance in Canadian historiography, as outlined by Owrarn, where Canadian history has been interpreted as the study of relations with Britain, or imperialism can be defined as a form of Canadian nationalism, particularly in emphasising separateness from America. As Owrarn argues, 'the historiography of Empire in Canada, therefore, is really only partly about the Empire. It is instead the story of Canada and her main link to the wider world.'⁹²

It is unsurprising that Canadian historians have little positive to say about Minto's career, and the major studies of his tenure dismiss Buchan's claims that Minto was able to impose his own influence and policy on Laurier's government.⁹³ Instead they tend towards the views expressed by more nationalistic contemporaries, like the journalist John Dafoe, who criticised Minto for interfering with Canadian autonomy on the orders of Chamberlain, an indiscretion that made him unsuitable for the position of a constitutional governor.⁹⁴ Miller argued that Minto, due to a combination of the limitations imposed by his office and his propensity to fight for lost causes, 'had little discernible effect on the formation of high policy.' He was not without influence, but suffered because of his distance from the centre of power and the indifference or annoyance demonstrated by the British government departments responsible for Canada.⁹⁵ Stevens and Saywell also tried to offer a more balanced view, defending Minto against the more virulent contemporary criticism. For them, Minto worked effectively in partnership with Laurier, who prevented the eruption of more serious crises during periods of tension, and the Governor was thus able to exercise his influence over important issues. However, Minto's career marked the end of the relationship he thought should exist between the Governor and the Canadian government.

⁹⁰ P. Buckner, 'Whatever happened to the British Empire?' *JCHA* 4 (1993), pp. 3-31; P. Buckner, 'The Creation of the Dominion of Canada, 1860-1901' in P. Buckner (ed.), *Canada and the British Empire* (OUP, Oxford, 2008), 66-86.

⁹¹ H.P. Gundy, 'Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Lord Minto' *Canadian Historical Association Annual Report* (1952), pp. 28-38; Messamore, 'Razor's Edge'; Miller, *Canadian Career*; Stevens & Saywell, *LMCP I*.

⁹² D.R. Owrarn, 'Canada and the Empire' in RW Winks (ed.) *The Oxford History of the British Empire Vol. V Historiography* (OUP, Oxford, 1999), pp. 146-162; C. Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1970).

⁹³ Buchan, *Lord Minto*, pp. 113-205; Miller, *Canadian Career*, passim; F. Underhill, 'Lord Minto on his Governor-Generalship' *CHR* 40 (1959), pp. 121-31.

⁹⁴ R. Cook, *The Politics of John W Dafoe* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1963), pp. 21 -24.

⁹⁵ Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 1-3, 192-96.

Minto's concern for the Empire and its military position blinded him to the realities of British and Canadian policies, especially the redefinition of military policy in the Western Hemisphere. Refusal to admit that self-government granted Canada control over its armed forces provoked crises over the position of the GOC, and Canada's rejection of Chamberlain's efforts to strengthen imperial connections signified the failure of Minto's efforts to encourage imperial sentiment in the wake of Boer War cooperation. Minto learned he could not force the adoption of unpopular policies and came to appreciate the complex nature of Canadian nationalist sentiment.⁹⁶

Minto's main appearances in Western contributions to Indian historiography are as the man who tried to block Morley's heroic efforts to emancipate India from British imperial tyranny and set them on the road to eventual independence. Such arguments dominated the approach adopted in the two anti-imperialist studies of Morley's tenure as Secretary of State for India written by American historians in the late 1960s. Historians like Wasti, who take a more balanced view of the reforms, recognise, however, that the respective role of the two men in their gestation was virtually equal.⁹⁷ Because of the reforms Minto's relationship with Morley is the most frequently and carefully considered aspect of his career. Beyond brief mentions in general histories, however, these events have disappeared from the historiographical world-view in recent years. The last monograph was published in the late 1960s, since when historians have moved on from Buchan's somewhat biased view that the Viceroy had dominated the relationship, ending his tenure with an impressive record of positive achievements on which to look back, particularly the reintroduction of harmony to fevered and disturbed India.⁹⁸ Wasti upheld the positive view of Minto, arguing that he coped admirably with the difficult task of restoring confidence in the Government of India and reconciling the aspirations of the growing number of educated Indians to British rule, while coping with the constant interference of an overweening superior in London.⁹⁹ Das's work represented the beginning of a change; for him Minto was merely a mediocre Viceroy who achieved the remarkable feat of keeping a great Liberal in line with his own conservative principles. Countering the traditional view of a harmonious relationship between the two men, Das argued that they actually differed bitterly on fundamental issues. Despite the rhetoric of understanding, the relationship was a

⁹⁶ Stevens & Saywell (eds.), *LMCP I*, pp. xiii-xxvi.

⁹⁷ S.E. Koss, *John Morley at the India Office, 1905-1910* (Yale University Press, London, 1970); S. Wolpert, *Morley and India, 1906-1910* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1967); S.R. Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement 1905-1910* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1964).

⁹⁸ Buchan, *Lord Minto*, pp. 209-328.

⁹⁹ Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement*, pp. 1-20.

clash of personalities between an obstinate mind and a shrewd vision.¹⁰⁰ Wolpert occupies the opposite end of the spectrum by establishing Morley as the hero of the tale. His legacy remained untarnished long after that of Minto had faded. It was Morley who was solely responsible for restoring tranquillity to India after Curzon and then moving it forward; elevating Minto to co-partnership was an ‘erroneous historical exaltation,’ the two men were only linked by ‘an accident of history.’ Minto failed to provide leadership for the Government of India and thus Morley’s confidence in his judgement diminished, resulting in an occasionally bitter struggle over whether the epicentre of power in British rule in India should be located in Simla or Whitehall.¹⁰¹

Changes in approach to the study of Canada or India’s relationship with the Empire represent the wider trends of imperial history. As Howe stresses, for the Dominions, interpreting the past has become a national exercise, (‘trying to escape the history of Empire’), where it has become difficult to discern what role, if any, Britain played in national development.¹⁰² Both have seen the shift away from the study of areas traditionally associated with imperial history, notably political and military matters. Dominated by ‘dead white men,’ such concerns are no longer considered relevant or fashionable, and are believed to contribute little to our understanding of the imperial experience in either Britain or its possessions. India has proved more susceptible to the influence of post-colonial discourse theories, particularly Said’s work. An interdisciplinary approach, rooted in the methodologies of literary criticism and social science, has become a dominating influence in the study of the dependent Empire. For India, the most important has been ‘subaltern studies,’ which aimed to analyse the discourses of domination and subordination to ‘promote the systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes...to rectify the elitist bias,’ and focus on previously neglected groups to gain a more complete picture of Indian nationalism.¹⁰³ Such ideas are not without their critics, and many have attacked the post-colonialists for their dismissal of traditional archival methods and their propensity to regard the Empire solely as a ‘cultural construct,’ thus ignoring the economic, political and strategic issues that are central to any understanding of Britain’s

¹⁰⁰ M.N. Das, *India Under Minto and Morley* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1964) pp. 46-61.

¹⁰¹ Wolpert, *Morley and India* pp. 1-29, 41-74, 229-236.

¹⁰² S. Howe, ‘The Slow Death and Strange Rebirths of Imperial History’ *JICH* 29 (2001), pp. 131-141. See, for example, Brown (ed.), *The Illustrated History of Canada*.

¹⁰³ E. Said, *Orientalism* (Penguin, London, 1995); D. Washbrook, ‘Orientals & Occidents: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of the British Empire’ in Winks (ed.), *OHBE* V, pp. 596-611; T. Raychaudri, ‘India, 1858 to the 1930s’ in Winks (ed.), *OHBE* V, pp. 214-230; R. Guha, ‘Preface’ in R. Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (OUP, New Delhi, 1982), pp. 1-8 quote on p. vii.

relationship with its Empire. The blinkered ‘post-colonialist’ approach, removing the men responsible for running the Empire from the central place they must occupy in any study, does little to develop understanding.¹⁰⁴

The reaction against these trends, combined with recent international events and the public consideration of ‘British identity,’ has prompted a more detailed discussion of the Empire’s place in British history. Leading historians like Bayly and Darwin have used imperial history to argue that ‘globalisation’ is not merely a modern issue.¹⁰⁵ The publication of the monumental Oxford History of the Empire helped to reinvigorate academic debate about the subject, provoking heated discussion about what actually constitutes imperial history.¹⁰⁶ Many historians have challenged the once central idea that the imperial past had to be studied under a yoke of guilt:

...Many younger British scholars appeared to be writing from a sense of shame – and collective shame is no better for analysis than assumptions of collective guilt or collective pride.¹⁰⁷

Although attempts to portray the Empire in a more balanced light, by stressing that it brought benefits as well as created problems, can still provoke vitriolic criticism,¹⁰⁸ British historians have rejected the anti-imperialist tone previously inherent in studies by Americans, to take a more objective view. Attempts to utilise the imperial past to understand modern political developments have aided the efforts of those like Hopkins, who aim not only to restore the Empire to the epicentre of the study of British history, but also to end the process of ‘indigenisation’ within imperial history by returning the

¹⁰⁴ D. Kennedy, ‘Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory’ *JICH* 24 (1996), pp. 345-363; Price, ‘One Big Thing’; D. Henige, ‘Omphaloskepsis and the Infantilising of History’ *Journal of African History* 36 (1995), pp. 311-318.

¹⁰⁵ C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914* (Blackwell, Oxford, 2004); J. Darwin, *After Tamerlane: A Global History of Empire* (Penguin, London, 2007); N. Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain made the Modern World* (Penguin, London, 2003); G. Vuoto, ‘The Anglo-American Global Imperial Legacy: Is there a better way?’ *CJH* 42 (2007), pp. 159-169.

¹⁰⁶ Howe, ‘Slow Death’; D. Kennedy, ‘Review Article: The Boundaries of Oxford’s Empire’ *IHR* 22 (2001), pp. 604-622.

¹⁰⁷ R.W. Winks, ‘The Future of Imperial History’ in *OHBE* V, p. 657.

¹⁰⁸ V. Lal, ‘Good Nazis and Just Scholars: Much ado about the British Empire’ *Race and Class* 38 (4) (1997) pp. 90-100, is an extreme example. See also the controversy provoked by Ferguson’s *Empire* at both an academic and popular level.

Dominions to their central place in the subject and considering the Empire as a ‘dynamic global network’ under British direction.¹⁰⁹

Among those who still admit continued British paramountcy in imperial history much attention has been paid to the more dynamic proconsuls, such as Curzon or Milner, whose intellectual prowess or fervent imperialism made them stand out amongst less ‘brilliant’ contemporaries. But a propensity to launch unwelcome policy initiatives of their own and create trouble for London, often made them less popular than steadier colleagues. Yet as the above narrative hopefully illustrates, a study of Lord Minto’s imperial career offers scope for wider investigation into the Empire during one of its most interesting periods. He was one of the many aristocrats who continued to wield power in the higher echelons of imperial government, a prime example of the ‘gentlemanly amateur’ who still dominated in an age when the professional administrator was only beginning to emerge. Similar educational backgrounds and career paths, combined with frequent contact in clubs and ‘society,’ created a shared ethos amongst this ruling caste that influenced attitudes towards its Empire and permeated the ‘official mind.’ Foremost was a pragmatic realisation that the heterogeneous nature of Britain’s imperial territories rendered any attempt to impose an overarching theory of governance upon them at best hopeless and at worst dangerous. With its possessions divided into three separate groupings of self-governing colonies, India, and the crown colonies, it was difficult to find policies to suit the diverse regions within these let alone for the whole Empire. Policies were still governed by certain ‘unspoken assumptions’ that permeated the outlook of all involved in imperial administration, foremost of which was ensuring the security of British interests as defined by the government against external or internal threats. Regardless of what other historians have argued for the influence of financiers or missionaries, these claims were never allowed to interfere with this primary concern.

Minto’s career as Governor General in Canada and Viceroy in India provides a more accurate image of the workings of the British Empire in two of its most important and different, possessions during an important period of transition. Investigation from an imperial rather than a nationalist Canadian or Indian perspective provides a more balanced view of imperial development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by

¹⁰⁹ Hopkins, ‘Back to the Future’, pp. 198ff; A.G. Hopkins, *The Future of the Imperial Past* (CUP, Cambridge, 1997).

restoring Britain and its policies and officials to the central position that they must necessarily occupy. Minto was certainly more representative of the way that Britain actually ran its Empire than any of his more famous contemporaries. He was not a ‘great’ proconsul, however that is to be defined, and this is a pivotal point. Instead, he was one of the many pragmatists who served the Empire and helped to steady it and ‘reset it to default’ after periods of rule by the more zealous or lazy members of the imperial service. As one Canadian historian argues, it was one thing to sit in Britain and expound great theories on imperial government, but quite another for the ‘man on the spot’ to implement them in territories the size of Western Europe, and where the issues of imperial relations did not rank high in the list of local priorities.¹¹⁰ But this was a key function for imperial governors, to act as a bridge between local opinion and the ‘official mind’, and therefore it was important for them to be representatives of the latter, but possessing an acute ability to understand the former. Men like Minto were the reality of the Empire, true examples of the ‘official mind’, who represented the larger forces behind the ‘ornamentalist’ image of Britain and its Empire. Like many of his true contemporaries, Minto had a much better grasp of the requirements of imperial defence and the role that the Empire could play in maintaining Britain’s international position than the so-called imperialists. His responses to events were much more in line with reality – he learned from his early mistakes, and accepted that he was there to govern and implement the policies of his superiors (whether he agreed with them or not). He did not try to run any of the territories he governed like a personal fiefdom, or allow his personal political principles to interfere with the everyday running of the Empire, an attitude that was to bring him into conflict with his more idealistic superiors on several occasions. Although describing Cromer, Owen’s views could be applied to many of the Empire’s highest officials during the Edwardian period, including Minto:

like so many imperial administrators of his kind, [he] is better seen as an energizer, a coordinator, and implementer, a problem-solver, and an apologist, rather than as an original thinker in his own right.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ R. Page, ‘Canada and the Imperial Idea in the Boer War Years’ *JCS* 5 (1970), p. 47

¹¹¹ R. Owen, *Lord Cromer* (OUP, Oxford, 2004), p. ix.

2. Repairing the Damage: Minto and his Predecessors

Aberdeen and Minto

Not all share the opinion of Canadian liberal-nationalist historians that Aberdeen was a model governor; one more imperially minded interwar historian argued that 'there can be no doubt that Aberdeen lowered his office.'¹¹² Aberdeen's lasting impact on Canada was the further downgrading of the already declining powers of the Governor General. He was unfortunate to encounter an apparently never-ending series of domestic political crises worsened by an absence of talented or acceptable leaders among the ruling Conservatives. Concerns about the influence of his overbearing wife, who was treated as an equal partner in the task of government, and their barely concealed Liberal leanings, meant that their intervention during the Manitoba Schools Question, although driven by an altruistic desire to end the ethnic intolerance that so shocked them, was treated with suspicion and provoked complaints about unnecessary interference. Paradoxically he faced equal criticism for his prolonged absence from Ottawa at the nadir of the crisis. His final intervention, during the prolonged collapse of Tupper's government, was constitutionally correct but weakly defended and earned him the lasting contempt of the Conservative party and press.

Minto was unfortunate in his predecessor; given carte blanche over the man he would succeed it is unlikely that Aberdeen would have been first choice. He followed a popular and unassuming non-entity, who held a very different conception of the post and was entirely dominated by his wife. His career is only discussed in the context of Canadian events, and studying these makes it clear why Aberdeen, when compared with that of an active proconsul like Curzon or even Minto, has never warranted an independent study in his own right. The primacy of internal affairs during Aberdeen's tenure, caused by bitter partisan and ethnic tension, combined with his indolence towards imperial responsibilities, created a belief that the Governor needed to be less obtrusive rather than be given greater freedom of expression as the Dominion grew in strength and confidence.¹¹³ Thus Minto,

¹¹² W.P.M. Kennedy, 'The Constitution and its Working, 1867-1921' in J.H. Rose, et al (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the British Empire Vol. VI Canada and Newfoundland* (CUP, Cambridge, 1930), pp. 697ff.

¹¹³ Kennedy, 'The Constitution and its Working', pp. 697ff; Kirk-Greene, 'Governors-General', p. 44; Messamore, 'Razor's Edge', pp. 377-380; Neuendorff, *Evolution of Dominion Status*, pp. 167-173; N. Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism, 1896-1899* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1965), pp. 139ff;

whose tenure was dominated by imperial and foreign policy issues, immediately faced difficulties caused by the widely circulated but misguided opinions about the Governor's duties.

The contrast Minto's tenure offered with Aberdeen created a belief among contemporary Canadians that his appointment had been motivated by a British desire to strengthen imperial ties. His denunciation as Chamberlain's 'sinister agent' by an embittered Canadian journalist damaged his historical reputation almost beyond repair, and Buchan's controversial biography did little to help:

With Mr Chamberlain at the Colonial Office, it was impossible for the new Governor General to be a merely spectacular figure, opening and dissolving parliaments or giving automatic assent to ordinances. He was a representative of a new school of imperial thought which Canada could not ignore: and with this new spirit abroad his office took on a greater significance.¹¹⁴

Consensus emerged among earlier Canadian historians that Minto's appointment was engineered by Chamberlain as part of an elaborate plan to choose crusader proconsuls to educate recalcitrant colonials in accordance with his ideals; converting them to closer imperial union and actively promoting military reform. Chamberlain's alleged plot to summarily replace Aberdeen with a Governor more to his taste assumed a mythic status that some later Canadian historians attempted to debunk, although the argument is not without foundation. Some defended Minto for his restraint in not rushing into attempts to foster imperial enthusiasm merely to please the Colonial Secretary, citing Buchan's views that while Minto supported Chamberlain's aims, his willingness to criticise his superior's policies and reluctance to trust him because of his association with the 'ungentlemanly' Rhodes, proved he was no 'blind hero-worshipper.'¹¹⁵

J.T. Saywell, (ed.) *The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen* (The Champlain Society, Toronto, 1960), Introduction; P.B. Waite, *Canada 1874-1896: Arduous Destiny* (McLelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1971), pp. 252ff.

¹¹⁴ Buchan, *Lord Minto*, p. 121.

¹¹⁵ Buchan, *Lord Minto*, p. 131; J.L. Garvin *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain* (Macmillan, London, 1932); Gundy, 'Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Lord Minto', p.29; Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 49-50; D. Morton, *Canada and War: A Military and Political History* (Butterworth, Toronto, 1981), p. 37; D. Morton, *Ministers and Generals; Politics and the Canadian Militia 1868-1904* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1970), p.35; Neuendorff, *Evolution of Dominion Status*, pp. 173-178; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 138-142; R.A. Preston, *Canada and 'Imperial Defense': A Study in the Origins of the British Commonwealth's Defense Organisation, 1867-1919* (Duke University Press, Durham, 1967), p. 245; Stevens & Saywell (eds.), *LMCP I*, pp. xlix-l.

Minto's entry in the Dictionary of National Biography created an unfortunate and lasting image:

one of those men who would probably never have risen to the high offices except in a country where some deference was still paid to the claims of birth and position.¹¹⁶

Little in his early career had suggested the makings of an imperial statesman. The widespread belief that aristocrats were well suited to imperial government made the 'claims of birth and position' important considerations in Minto's appointment. He was not the first choice for Canada, and was only approached after various other aristocratic candidates had rejected the offer.¹¹⁷ Miller argues that Minto was not Chamberlain's hand-picked choice or the pliant instrument of a grander imperial design as if this had been the Colonial Secretary's aim he would have chosen a more malleable, politically experienced and subtle man, who understood the relative impotence of the Governor's post,¹¹⁸ although imperial representative was a role into which Minto grew successfully. Minto claimed to 'have done nothing directly myself' but he campaigned hard for the position, making no secret of his desire for preferment; it was a post he coveted and actively solicited, working assiduously through more influential friends to obtain it, especially when he learned of the impending vacancy. Wolseley, who had previously advised Minto to go for the Governor's post, was used as an intermediary to approach Lansdowne, while his candidacy was raised with other senior Cabinet figures as well as influential Canadians like Mountstephen and Strathcona.¹¹⁹ Brodrick offered assurance that he had given the issue a 'little shove in the right direction' and that his friends had been willing advocates.¹²⁰ Lady Minto's contacts at court proved vital, as Buckingham Palace retained some control over prestigious imperial appointments and was known to have heartily disapproved of Lady Aberdeen.¹²¹ These efforts evidently worked as Minto learned of his appointment on 19 July 1898, admitting

¹¹⁶ Quote from DNB in Adonis, *Making Aristocracy Work*, p. 218.

¹¹⁷ Adonis, *Making Aristocracy Work*, pp. 219-20, 230.

¹¹⁸ Miller, *Canadian Career*, p.49.

¹¹⁹ *LMCP I*, Lord Minto's Journal, 25 March, 26 June & 17 July 1898, pp. 1-4.

¹²⁰ *LMCP I*, Brodrick to Lord Minto, 30 June 1898, pp. 2-3.

¹²¹ Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 48, 55-56; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 140-141.

that he owed much to his friends, many of whom offered congratulations and expressed their belief that his appointment was the best thing for Canada.¹²²

Minto was immensely proud of his new position and believed that his eclectic career, which he admitted was unlikely to lead to great appointments, made him more suited for it than those with experience only in politics, where minds were 'formed in a groove' and contact with a 'large range of humanity' was limited, making them unaware that men existed outside official circles as capable of administering the Empire as those in them.¹²³ As Minto's career did not suggest the making of an imperial statesman, he owed his appointment to various other factors. Perhaps his early days as a 'daringly successful gentleman jockey'¹²⁴ were not the best qualification, but family traditions of imperial service, and connections with the Unionist elite who controlled such appointments proved helpful. Of more importance was his time as Lansdowne's military secretary in the 1880s which had provided valuable first-hand experience of Canada and its defensive requirements, and was perceived to be a distinct advantage by his British superiors and new Canadian colleagues; indeed Laurier claimed that news of Minto's elevation was 'received with universal satisfaction by those who remembered his services.'¹²⁵ Miller admits that Minto's influence with the War Office, acting as an unofficial spokesman in the Lords and publishing articles in journals, was an important consideration in his appointment,¹²⁶ a point that Penlington also emphasises by arguing that Minto's 'considerable military reputation' meant that 'from the point of view of the British authorities no man could better fill the post of Governor-General....since he possessed a wide knowledge of Canadian military conditions.'¹²⁷ Penlington supports the traditional argument, dismissing Saywell's claim that Aberdeen decided to resign for financial reasons.¹²⁸ Considering Chamberlain's decision to recall Aberdeen after he had apparently performed his task well and integrated into Canadian life, Penlington states that he had failed to represent the British Government as well as he had done for the crown. An

¹²² *LMCP I*, Chamberlain to Minto, 19 July, 1898, Brodrick to Minto, 22 July 1898, Journal 26 July 1898, pp. 4-7; NLS MS 12390, Lord Minto's Miscellaneous Correspondence 1891 to August 1898; MS 12391, Lord Minto's Miscellaneous Correspondence August to December 1898.

¹²³ *LMCP I*, Journal, 17 & 26 July 1898, pp.3-4, 6-7.

¹²⁴ Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 138-42. See also Buchan, *Lord Minto*, pp. 113-118; Kirk-Greene, 'Governors-General'; Miller, *Canadian Career*, p.1.

¹²⁵ *LMCP*, Lansdowne to Minto, 23 July 1898, Laurier to Minto, 28 July 1898, pp. 6-7; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, p. 138.

¹²⁶ Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 45-46.

¹²⁷ Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, p.139; N. Penlington, 'General Hutton and the Problem of Military Imperialism in Canada, 1898-1900' *CHR* 24 (1943), p. 158.

¹²⁸ Kirk-Greene, 'Governors-General', p. 44; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, p. 139; Saywell, *Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, p. xxxii.

‘indiscriminate indolence’ pervaded Aberdeen’s actions when matters did not interest him, in sharp contrast with the energy and subtlety of which he was capable when subjects aroused his enthusiasm. Failure to offer advice about important issues like the GOC’s planned resignation provoked Colonial Office complaints and aroused concerns that Aberdeen’s willingness to allow the Governor’s powers to atrophy was lowering the dignity of the office. Penlington argues that these anxieties, particularly Aberdeen’s lack of interest in one increasingly important area of imperial policy, influenced the decision to appoint Minto as his successor:

Under existing conditions little further military progress was immediately possible in Canada, more forceful men than General Gascoigne and Lord Aberdeen as GOC and Governor General were essential. Two such men arrived in August and November 1898...No matter how able the men, however, their success depended on public acceptance of their leadership, and this in turn depended largely on the continuance of anti-American resentments. These not only continued but intensified.¹²⁹

Canadian critics raised concerns about Minto’s military background and lack of administrative experience. Remarks in the British press that Minto had been appointed to rule the Dominion ‘vigorously’ heightened their anxieties. Penlington challenges assumptions that Minto ‘was a constitutional ignoramus’ by arguing that the valuable experience he had gained working with Lansdowne and his study of key texts on the self-governing colonies made him more than a ‘combination country squire and heavy dragoon.’ Re-examination of his policies and accomplishments, particularly his role in furthering British understanding of Canada’s evolving relationship with the Empire, highlights the unconvincing nature of such views.¹³⁰

Because of their opposing political backgrounds Minto’s conception of the gubernatorial role, particularly his desire to be a strong and conscientious leader and more than a mere figurehead, was very different from Aberdeen’s. As such it has generated criticism from Canadian historians who resent the inferiority implied by the imposition of unqualified aristocrats to rule the ‘senior Dominion.’ Miller, and Stevens and Saywell, argue that little scope existed for an ambitious Governor and that the Canadian government and imperial

¹²⁹ Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 80, 140; Messamore, ‘Razor’s Edge’, p. 381.

¹³⁰ Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, p. 142.

authorities were the best defenders of the imperial interests that Minto aimed to protect; Governors were rarely issued with specific instructions about their roles as imperial officers.¹³¹ Such an argument is disingenuous, as the Governor was the imperial government's representative in Ottawa, and retained a responsibility to inform the Colonial Office if he felt British interests were being neglected or damaged. Minto wanted to retain every vestige of his prerogatives as an imperial officer and it was the contrast with his predecessor that caused problems.

While some of Minto's correspondents admitted Aberdeen's popularity, many echoed the excitement about the change expressed by one:

Without wishing to criticise the late lamented occupant of the viceregal throne I am in a position to know that your appointment is generally considered a most popular one and a vast 'improvement' on your immediate predecessor.¹³²

Unionists and Canadian Conservatives were glad to be rid of the openly Liberal governor, especially one so admiring of Gladstone, while Canada's military welcomed the appointment of soldier to replace a man they derided as an 'ex-duffer.'¹³³ Minto himself hinted that it would be easy to succeed Aberdeen,¹³⁴ remarking privately to his brother that on his departure the 'whole country seems to have given an intense sigh of relief.' The tendency to criticise his predecessor had created some awkward moments for Minto, who was reluctant to publicly disparage a fellow peer, especially after Aberdeen's friendly reception and assistance in providing information about the issues Minto would confront as Governor. Minto, however, marvelled at his predecessor's methods, admitting that he had 'hardly imagined such a regime [was] possible,' and that 'respectful contempt' was the best description of their lasting impression. People regarded Aberdeen as a thorough gentleman, industrious and with excellent intentions, but who was unable to concentrate on subjects and had the added problem of a domineering wife, who had 'earned the acid

¹³¹ Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 51-59; Stevens & Saywell, *LMCP*, pp. xiii-xiv, xlix-l.

¹³² NLS MS 12391, Rideau Club to Minto, 9 August 1898.

¹³³ British Library, Major-General E.T.H. Hutton Papers, Additional Manuscripts 50088, Correspondence with Lieutenant General Sir William Seymour, May 1898 to January 1900, Seymour to Hutton, 25 July 1898; NLS MS 12576, Lord Minto's Correspondence with Major-General Edward Hutton, March 1900 to January 1905, Hutton to Minto, 15 February 1903.

¹³⁴ *LMCP I*, Journal, 25 March 1898, p. 1.

sobriquet of Governess General.’¹³⁵ Minto hoped in particular to restore the dignity appropriate for the gubernatorial establishment and reassert the prestige of the monarch and Empire. Thus Aberdeen’s innovations in inviting tradesmen and servants to official dinners, which had made the latter ‘odious,’ were swiftly ended, and plans for a tram line running outside Rideau Hall were shelved. ‘Notwithstanding all their nonsense’ the Aberdeens’ energy and kindness had helped them engage with Canadian society. Minto, offering one of the few hints that he intended to emphasise the imperial aspects of the role, stated to his brother that he had different ideas about what was expected of the Governor and believed he would have to take a new approach if the appointment was to carry the respect it ought, although he recognised that this may provoke criticism.¹³⁶

Minto was undoubtedly glad that, unlike his predecessor, imperial issues dominated during his tenure, although that he was able to make efforts to encourage imperial sentiment was due in part to the legacy bestowed by Aberdeen, which offered opportunities to exploit Canadian imperialism. Minto’s fears that not all of Canadian opinion would approve of the new gubernatorial style, particularly his strong support of imperial military policies, were proved correct. But this was predictable – all new Governors faced criticism in comparison to their predecessors, and while they faced hostility from one section of public opinion, another would be equally quick to defend them. In July 1900, by this stage well established in his post, the ‘Toronto Telegram’ claimed that the Aberdeens would not suffer by comparison to Minto, unlike him they had never shown any inclination to interfere, nor had they ever insulted Canada. In a country where the press was notoriously partisan such barbed comments were to be expected, and many other papers were quick to accuse them of ‘Mintophobia.’¹³⁷

Gundy has argued that ‘the almost simultaneous appointment of two well-known military men appeared to augur a shake up in the Canadian militia.’¹³⁸ Many Canadians feared that Chamberlain’s objective in making these appointments was to effect an unwelcome reorganisation of Canada’s forces to make them available for imperial defence purposes. Such suspicions were reinforced by Hutton and Minto’s connections with Wolseley, who

¹³⁵ Kirk-Greene, ‘Governors-General’, pp. 51-52; Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 55-56.

¹³⁶ *LMCP I*, Minto to A. Elliot, 25 December 1898, pp. 22-25.

¹³⁷ NLS MS 12583, Lord Minto’s Canadian Press Cuttings, October 1898 to October 1900, *Toronto Telegram*, 30 July 1900, ‘No Thanks to him’; *Brockville Times*, 3 August 1900.

¹³⁸ Gundy, ‘Wilfrid Laurier and Lord Minto’, p. 33.

was working with Chamberlain to promote closer cooperation and reform of Canada's defence system. The Governor and GOC both admitted owing a lot to the Commander-in-Chief's patronage and support, which had influenced the decisions to appoint them.¹³⁹ Hutton regarded himself as an 'imperial agent,' and was an aggressive and energetic reformer 'cast in the proconsular mould.'¹⁴⁰ His close friendship with Minto had developed through their mutual association with the Mounted Infantry movement, and its distorting influence on Minto's perception of issues created many problems in the early stages of the Governor's career. Hutton also became the source of many misinterpretations about Minto's career, as early historians were guilty of taking his views at face value. Hutton believed the force of character and leadership abilities Minto had developed during his military career made him the perfect choice for Canadian Governor:

To ensure the success of the imperial reforms thus to be initiated and yet to modify too hasty or premature action, while being ready with sage counsel and well-balanced advice, a statesman of the highest qualities was obviously required as Governor General. An ideal personality was selected in the Earl of Minto. The principles and opinions of the new Governor General were in all essential points identical with those of the Wolseley school....earnest of purpose, lofty in aim, who possessed the strength of will and moral courage, without which no great undertaking can be carried to a successful conclusion.¹⁴¹

According to Hutton 'few contemporaries displayed to greater advantage such qualities of statesmanship.'¹⁴² It was hoped that this similarity of outlook would create an effective partnership for encouraging Canadian defensive reform, although Minto realised more quickly the need for a pragmatic approach when dealing with Canadian politicians.

Like Minto, Hutton's previous experience of reorganising military forces in a self-governing colony and distinguished military career were believed to make him an ideal candidate for his post and one correspondent commented that 'No one has ever before

¹³⁹ NLS MS 12502, Lord Minto's Journal October 1905-1913, 11 March 1913, p. 63; MS 12582, Lord Minto's Miscellaneous Canadian Papers, November 1898 to November 1904, 'John Gilbert, 4th Earl of Minto, Governor General of Canada, 1898-1904: A Narrative by E.T.H. Hutton', pp. 234-38; BL, Add Mss 50113, Major-General E.T.H. Hutton's Draft Memoirs, p. 353; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, p. 70; M. Wade, *The French-Canadians* (Macmillan, London, 1955), p. 476.

¹⁴⁰ Morton, *Canada at War*, pp. 36-44; Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, pp. 133-162; Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense*, pp. 245ff.

¹⁴¹ BL Add Mss 50113, pp. 353-354.

¹⁴² NLS MS 12582, '4th Earl of Minto' pp. 238-243.

gone to Canada with your experience.’¹⁴³ Hutton held innovative views on imperial defence, believing that each part of the Empire should provide for its own passive defence and help in the active defence of the Empire as a whole.¹⁴⁴ He was urged by senior soldiers like Ardagh, the Director of Military Intelligence, to introduce in Canada, as he had successfully done in Australia, a cooperative defence system that would facilitate closer imperial integration.¹⁴⁵ Hutton ignored warnings from Seymour and Kitson, Commandant of the Royal Military College, about the difficulties involved in working with the Canadian government. Few remained long in the post as influencing government decisions was a laborious process, the GOC was expected to act merely as the minister’s mouthpiece, and would face a long series of insults and annoyances: ‘it is a Herculean task to actually do any good...except to a man who glories in a gloriously uphill task with little reward, I can’t recommend the position.’¹⁴⁶ He would not be put off and welcomed the challenges offered by the Canadian command. Canadian historians have stressed, however, that these problems were not solely the result of ministerial refusal to accept sound military advice or fulfil duties towards the Empire, but were often caused by the notoriously tactless generals sent by Britain.¹⁴⁷ Indeed the Colonial Office, aware of his troubles in Australia, was wary about appointing a general lacking tact and commonsense; as Buchan remarked, the last thing Canada wanted was a military enthusiast.¹⁴⁸

The War Office urged caution but insisted on Hutton’s appointment, resisting pressure to appoint Lake, as they feared his relatively junior rank and popularity in Canada would allow Laurier’s government to dictate policy. Tact was not the sole quality required in the new GOC, although Hutton was warned that its absence had created problems for his predecessors. Ministers and senior military officers, like Buller, advised him that self-governing colonies could not be coerced into accepting policies they found objectionable and attempts to do so would only provoke opposition; firm leadership and flattery were

¹⁴³ BL Add Mss 50087, Major-General E.T.H. Hutton’s Correspondence with British Military Officers, June 1899 to January 1900, Peacocke to Hutton, 25 February 1899.

¹⁴⁴ Morton, *Canada at War*, pp. 36-37; Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, pp. 133ff; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 132-137; Penlington, ‘General Hutton’, pp. 158ff. The correspondence in NLS MS 12576 between Minto and Hutton provide an outline of his views on imperial defence.

¹⁴⁵ BL Add Mss 50113, Hutton’s Memoirs, pp. 333-334; NLS MS 12582, ‘4th Earl of Minto,’ pp. 233-256.

¹⁴⁶ BL Add Mss 50088, Major-General E.T.H. Hutton’s Correspondence with Major-General Gerald Kitson, October 1897 to December 1908, Kitson to Hutton, 2 October 1897 & 17 May 1898, Seymour to Hutton, 2 May 1898.

¹⁴⁷ Preston, *Imperial Defense*, p. 224.

¹⁴⁸ Buchan, *Lord Minto*, pp. 125-128; Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 64-65.

necessary to assist Hutton to achieve his aims.¹⁴⁹ One was to overcome ingrained Canadian indifference to national defence and reluctance to contribute to the Empire, which was frequently concealed behind its wish to focus on its internal development. Not afforded a high priority by successive governments, the militia had been left to decay, becoming permeated by inefficiency and disorganisation. British pressure for improvement was resolutely resisted until the inadequacy of Canadian defence preparations was exposed during the Venezuela crisis, although the peaceful denouement merely reinforced the Conservatives' hesitancy in implementing changes. Few expectations existed that the new Liberal government would continue even these minimal efforts, but Laurier wished to pander to the more virulent Canadian imperialism and anti-American hostility provoked by Venezuela. He thus supported Borden's efforts to attack the more glaring deficiencies and welcomed the appointment of a committee to report on Canadian defence, although further progress was hindered by the presence of a lethargic GOC lacking any influence in Britain and an avowedly Gladstonian governor. Laurier had publicly expressed Canada's enthusiasm for the Empire at the 1897 conference, and, despite his rejection of proposals for defence centralisation, had alluded to its responsibilities to assist the Empire. Britain believed that the appointment of a more prestigious officer would help to further imperialist sentiment and secure formal imperial defence arrangements.¹⁵⁰

Minto seemed somewhat disappointed by his final meeting with the Colonial Secretary, leaving no record of the conversation beyond a note in his journal that Chamberlain had nothing of importance to say, offering no specific instructions or guidance on any imperial 'blueprint.'¹⁵¹ Hutton, however, departed convinced that he had been sent to Canada on a mission to implement his own particular view of imperial defence policy. He was keen to secure Minto's support for his plans to reform the Canadian militia, and hoped to utilise the Governor's prestige to assist him rather than work with his actual constitutional superior. Hutton stressed to Minto before he arrived in Ottawa that both Lansdowne and

¹⁴⁹ BL Add Mss 50078, Major-General E.T.H. Hutton's Correspondence with Joseph Chamberlain, November 1898 to March 1900, Interview with Chamberlain 8 August 1898, Interview with Wingfield, 10 August 1898; Add Mss 50085, Major-General E.T.H. Hutton's Correspondence with Lord Lansdowne, Lord Wolseley and General Sir Redvers Buller, August 1898 to March 1901, Interview with Lansdowne, 3 August 1898, Interview with Wolseley and Buller, 29 July 1898; Add Mss 50113, pp. 124ff.

¹⁵⁰ NLS MS 12582, '4th Earl of Minto,' pp. 220-237; BL Add Mss 50113, pp. 124ff; Add Mss 50088, Kitson to Hutton, 2 October 1897; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 12-52, 67-80; Penlington, 'General Hutton', pp. 156-157; R.A. Preston, *The Defence of an Undefended Border: Planning for War in North America* (McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal & London, 1977), pp. 125ff; Preston, *Imperial Defense*, pp. 233ff.

¹⁵¹ *LMCP I*, Journal, 28 July 1898, p.7; Miller, *Canadian Career*, p. 54; Stevens & Saywell (eds.), *LMCP I*, pp. xlix ff.

Chamberlain were anxious for Canada's military house to be set in order, and had claimed that for this task Minto's 'well-known soldierly qualities' would be very valuable.¹⁵² Wolseley, Lansdowne and Chamberlain had outlined to Hutton the difficulties he was likely to encounter, although he did not believe the likely problems would prevent him repeating his Australian successes. Some consensus was reached on what could be achieved, as all agreed that it would be necessary to minimise political interference and patronage to improve discipline and professional standards. They also believed that Hutton could utilise the Canadian government's anxiety to improve the militia to create a force capable of rapid mobilisation and checking an enemy advance until reinforcements arrived, thus assisting Britain to fulfil its obligations to defend Canada by placing the country's defence on a satisfactory footing.¹⁵³

Hutton had drawn up with Ardagh before departing a schedule for his reforms and a list of principles to govern Canadian defence policy. He welcomed the Defence Commission's work, believing it had strengthened his hand by demonstrating Britain's determination to press for the necessary reforms in the militia, although Leach later castigated the GOC, blaming him for Laurier's refusal to implement his recommendations.¹⁵⁴ His main aim was to educate public opinion as he had done in Australia to support his plans to create a satisfactory military organisation, and the anticipation of his appointment in military quarters seemed to augur well: 'There is little doubt but that Major-General Hutton will evolve a scheme to bring order out of chaos.'¹⁵⁵

According to Hutton's recollections, coloured by bitter memories of the circumstances surrounding his departure, the excitement about his reforms did not extend to the Government, which afforded him a somewhat frosty reception. Hutton attributed this to Laurier and Borden's opposition to his plans, and he criticised them for lacking knowledge of military organisation and administration or Canadian defence and imperial strategy. In his opinion their only interest in military affairs related to patronage, and their dearth of

¹⁵² *LMCP I*, Hutton to Minto, 9 August 1898, p. 8; Penlington, 'General Hutton', p.160.

¹⁵³ BL Add Mss 50078, Interview with Chamberlain 8 August 1898, Interview with Wingfield, 10 August 1898; Add Mss 50085, Interview with Lansdowne, 3 August 1898, Interview with Wolseley and Buller, 29 July 1898; Add Mss 50113, pp. 124ff; Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, pp. 135-136.

¹⁵⁴ BL Add Mss 50113, pp. 333-334; *LMCP I*, Hutton to Minto, 30 March 1899, pp. 46-47; NLS MS 12570, Lord Minto's Canadian Correspondence, January 1901 to May 1902, Leach to Ommanney, 1 March 1901; MS 12582, '4th Earl of Minto,' p. 252.

¹⁵⁵ NLS MS 12582, *The Gazette*, 1 November 1898, 'County Grants to Militia Corps.'

moral courage, political conviction or a definite defence policy was illustrated by their willingness to wait until his recommendations had been accepted with enthusiastic acclaim by the public and militia before agreeing to implement the necessary reforms.¹⁵⁶ Canadian historians have, predictably, rejected these accusations. Miller disputes traditional arguments that Minto and Hutton induced the government to adopt a policy they had formerly repudiated by mobilising public opinion, arguing instead that as Borden's fifteen-year service as Minister of Militia and dedication to improving the force gave it a new public significance he deserves the credit for introducing reforms.¹⁵⁷ Penlington argues that Hutton's intention to force reforms on the government created a contrast with his indolent predecessor that alarmed his superiors. Although he was undoubtedly aware of them, Hutton chose to wilfully disregard the four key issues it was necessary for the GOC to approach carefully to avoid trouble. Canadian public apathy with regard to military matters and colonial sensitivity created by nascent nationalism were likely to collide with an enthusiastic GOC bent on reforming Canadian forces to enable them to contribute to wider imperial defence. Apparently glorying in creating tension, he rarely aspired to the great tact that was necessary to fill the post without friction Hutton's determination to work with Minto instead of Borden and his willingness to criticise Laurier's government demonstrated the difficulties likely to result from the ill-defined legal position of the GOC, his inferiority to the Canadian government, and the loose constitutional conventions that left military affairs to be managed on an everyday basis.¹⁵⁸

Hutton believed that the 'colonials' needed an imperial officer to show them how an army should be run, although Canadian historians have criticised him for treating the militia not as Canada's national military organisation, but as a district of the British military command system.¹⁵⁹ Such criticism is unfair, as most imperial officers regarded the forces in the self-governing colonies as integral parts of a wider imperial defence system that would hopefully unify the Empire, rather than serving a purely local function, and they had to be reformed to fulfil this larger role. Hutton aimed to create a national force of which Canada could be proud, but which would also be capable of assisting to defend the Empire. His arrival in Ottawa provided an impetus that had previously been lacking in previous reform

¹⁵⁶ BL Add Mss 50087, Hutton to Nathan, 9 January 1899; NLS MS 12582, '4th Earl of Minto,' pp. 248-249; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 142ff.

¹⁵⁷ Gundy, 'Wilfrid Laurier and Lord Minto', p. 33; C. Miller, 'Sir Frederick Borden and Military Reform, 1896-1911' *CHR* 50 (1969), pp. 265-284; Morton, *Canada and War*, p. 35; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 67ff; Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense*, pp. 233ff.

¹⁵⁸ Penlington, 'General Hutton', pp. 158-162.

¹⁵⁹ Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense*, pp. 245ff.

efforts, and he enjoyed an initial ‘honeymoon period,’ working well with Borden and gaining the support of the militia. Hutton hoped that adopting a twin-track approach of highlighting the wretched condition of Canadian forces while simultaneously elevating military service to make it more prestigious in public eyes by eliminating party political interference would awaken dormant Canadian enthusiasm for the militia and stimulate imperial patriotism. This, he believed, would simplify his task of reorganising the force to enable it to fulfil its duties of defending Canada and the Empire.¹⁶⁰

Concerned by his unfavourable reception from Canada’s troops Hutton very quickly recognised that to implement any reforms, it was necessary to establish a mutual confidence with the troops by treating command as a personal matter. He used a series of personal inspections and meetings with officers in October and November 1898 to establish a previously absent connection with his men and identify both their essential requirements and the militia’s main faults. Hutton believed that this approach made it easier for him to find solutions to local difficulties than issuing anonymous instructions from Ottawa, and thus contributed much to ‘getting the whole of our Canadian army to work harmoniously.’¹⁶¹ Hutton regarded the Canadian troops as ‘intelligent and soldierly material,’ whose enthusiasm had maintained the force during years of neglect, and felt that to extract maximum efficiency from them as a force training had to be intensified and improved.¹⁶² Inherent enthusiasm had proved insufficient to counter the damage created by the pervasive Government indifference which had left the force in a ‘pitiable’ condition, especially at a higher level, and Hutton admitted he was not prepared for the chaos existing in the military department:

It is not too much to say that the present condition of the administration as carried out.... by our existing HQ system is, from a military point of view, chaotic and pregnant with friction in peace and disastrous in war or national emergency.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ BL Add Mss 50113, pp. 124-129; NLS, MS 12582, ‘4th Earl of Minto’, pp. 232ff; Buchan, *Lord Minto*, pp. 125-131; Gundy, ‘Wilfrid Laurier and Lord Minto’, p. 33-34; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 132ff.

¹⁶¹ BL Add Mss 50113, pp. 130ff; Add Mss 50078, Interview with Wingfield, 10 August 1898; Add Mss 50085, Hutton to Wolseley, 12 February 1899; Add Mss 50087, Hutton to Nathan, 9 January 1899; NLS, MS 12582, Address HQ Ottawa 15 November 1898.

¹⁶² NLS MS 12582, Meeting of Officers Commanding Military Districts Ottawa, 15-18 November 1898, Address HQ Ottawa 15 November 1898.

¹⁶³ BL Add Mss 50083, Major-General E.T.H. Hutton’s Correspondence with Canadian Politicians, August 1898 to May 1902, GOC Report on Headquarters Staff Administration, 6 October 1898, pp. 38-39; Add Mss 50078, Hutton to Chamberlain, 20 February 1899; Add Mss 50085, Hutton to Wolseley, 12 February 1899.

To establish a balanced army able to take the field on its own it was necessary to create a proper staff, administrative departments and higher organisation.

Hutton's first annual report, which he believed reflected his early experiences and continued the work of the Defence Commission, contained a harsh indictment of Canadian defence policy. His aim had been to accurately outline the unsatisfactory condition of military defence and the inadequate standard of the militia to enlighten the Government and public on the scale of the task improvement entailed. The militia had to be reorganised, as Hutton recommended, into a 'National Army' complete in all departments and trained to a higher standard. Hutton believed the force could attain appropriate levels of efficiency without difficulty or expense, enabling it to properly defend Canada by protecting key strategic centres and participating in wider imperial campaigns:

The creation of a Militia Army upon the lines indicated will transform the existing militia units into a Military Force which shall in some degree at least be worthy of the Canadian nation and be equal to maintaining the rights and liberties of the Canadian people. It will be in its true sense, a National Army, and will, as such, be able not only to defend inviolate the integrity of Canadian soil, but it will be capable of contributing to the military defence of the British Empire in a manner and with a power which will place Canada in a position of unparalleled dignity and influence among all the possessions of the Crown.

By emphasising that his new force increased not only Canadian capability to defend itself against attack, but also their ability to participate in imperial defence, Hutton made efforts to appeal to nationalists and imperialists in Canada.¹⁶⁴ Hutton's 'National Army' had provided an 'emotive slogan'¹⁶⁵ for his efforts, and his plans, offering an image of Canadian independence within an imperial framework, did arouse public support. Hopes were raised that facilitating imperial recruiting in Canada, by repatriating the old 100th Regiment, regarded by many as a potent symbol of Canada's imperial connections, would provide a simple short-term route to utilising the imperial sentiment recently aroused while Hutton's plans were implemented. The obstacles, however, proved insurmountable, although the Colonial Office blamed the British authorities in Canada for not considering

¹⁶⁴ BL Add Mss 50113, pp. 140-143; Morton, *Canada at War*, pp. 36-37; Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, pp. 138-145.

¹⁶⁵ Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, p. 142.

the issue in its entirety, particularly the advantages likely to accrue from establishing depots in imperialist areas like Toronto.¹⁶⁶ Minto and Hutton had analysed the issue in detail and agreed that the low rates of pay offered for imperial service would deter volunteers, and were influenced by Seymour's opinion that the Irish Catholic character of the regiment as currently constituted made it unsuitable to receive Canadian recruits, and that 'someone is advising the War Office who has never been to Canada and is perfectly ignorant of the requirements of the case or of the military history of Canada.'¹⁶⁷ They concluded that creating a new regiment for service in North America would be the best solution, but emphasised throughout that recruits could be found easily in wartime,¹⁶⁸ as was proved during the Boer War when Laurier's government raised a regiment to garrison Halifax thus freeing the British troops there for active service.

Pleased with Hutton's military achievements, Minto abandoned his initial approach of not becoming too closely associated for fear of avoiding suspicion, and now openly supported the GOC's efforts to promote the militia and raise its public standing by inviting officers to official functions. Minto stressed to Chamberlain, Lansdowne and Wolseley that Hutton had made an 'excellent start' to his reforms. Attacking the major problems with a 'great deal of tact,' he had breathed new life into a previously moribund institution and gained the support of the militia, the public and the press, who anticipated a new level of efficiency for the force. Minto laid equal stress to his correspondents on what remained to be done, as the 'absolute inefficiency' of the militia was difficult to imagine; lacking essential departments, plagued by indiscipline and incapable of concentration into larger units, the force required a massive overhaul, although scope existed for improvement over the next few years.¹⁶⁹ Hutton was equally effusive about his achievements, expressing satisfaction with his results and believing that his efforts had been an extraordinary success. A great surprise had been Borden's support. In contrast to his later opinions, Hutton initially believed that the Minister of Militia was 'particularly pleasant to deal with' and had a 'sound grasp of military requirements,' although concerns remained about the strength of

¹⁶⁶ TNA CO 42/868, Correspondence between Secretary of State and Dominion of Canada, January to June 1899, Recruiting in Canada for Imperial Duty, 23 February 1899.

¹⁶⁷ NLS MS 12578, Lord Minto's Correspondence with Lieutenant-General Sir William Seymour, September 1898 to July 1900, Seymour to Minto, 7 February 1899. See also *LMCP I*, Seymour to Minto, 26 November 1898, pp. 9-11; BL Add Mss 50088, Seymour to Hutton, 12 & 29 January 1899.

¹⁶⁸ NLS MS 12556, Lord Minto's Official Canadian Correspondence, November 1898 to April 1900, Minto to Seymour, 8 February 1899; BL Add Mss 50083, Hutton to Borden, 11 February 1899.

¹⁶⁹ *LMCP I*, Minto to Seymour, 22 November 1898, pp. 16-18, Minto to Chamberlain, 6 January 1899, pp. 28-29, Minto to Hutton, 16 January 1899, pp. 29-30, Minto to Lansdowne, 27 January 1899, p. 32, Minto to Wolseley, 21 April 1899, pp. 58-59.

his position in the Cabinet. A wave of military enthusiasm and patriotic ardour had been created, which would prove to be of great advantage, as it was 'utopian' to expect any colonial government to spend money unless the pressure of press and public opinion was brought to bear against them to drive reform forward. Chamberlain, perhaps pleased by the success of his appointees, promised to support the GOC as far as possible, believing that Minto would provide valuable assistance. But, in the Colonial Secretary's view, everything was dependent on the attitude of the Canadian government.¹⁷⁰

Minto was willing to remain in the background to avoid forcing an unenthusiastic government's hand over the recommended changes, but Hutton's abrasive personality and aggressive approach to addressing the problems he had identified, forgetting the advice offered about the need to work with the Canadians, caused tension to mount swiftly with Laurier's ministers over the purpose of military reform. Minto and Hutton agreed with the assessment offered by the British authorities about the main problems which had to be addressed before reforms could be enacted:

The abominable custom of political patronage which has so shamefully influenced the Militia Department [and] the attempt on the Civil side of the Department to assume military control in questions with which the GOC should deal at any rate in the first place.¹⁷¹

The first issue arose periodically during Minto's tenure, and often inflamed the friction created by the latter. An idea was prevalent among senior military officers and imperial officials, like Minto and Hutton, that democratic governments, especially in the colonies, could not be trusted with important matters like imperial defence. This, however, clashed with the established principle of vesting authority over the military in the elected representatives of the people, and both the Governor and the GOC were criticised for confusing unwelcome party interference with the necessity for political control of military affairs. Their objections, however, were frequently focused upon the extent to which

¹⁷⁰ NLS MS 12582, '4th Earl of Minto', pp. 238-242; BL Add Mss 50078, Hutton to Chamberlain, 20 February 1899, Chamberlain to Hutton, 14 March 1899; Add Mss 50085, Hutton to Wolseley, 12 February 1899, Wolseley to Hutton, 17 March 1899; Add Mss 50087, Hutton to Harrison, 8 June 1899, Hutton to Nathan, 9 January 1899.

¹⁷¹ *LMCP I*, Minto to Seymour, 22 November 1898, pp. 16-18.

Laurier's government pushed this principle, which threatened to either undermine military discipline or damage imperial interests.

Upon commencing his post Hutton emphasised that a key element of his plan was to raise defence policy above 'minor questions of local politics,' and to make it independent of religious denomination, thus enabling the creation of a 'National Army' representative of Canada as a whole and capable of defending its interests.¹⁷² Improving morale was dependent on ending the 'petty log-rolling' that had previously 'crushed the life' out of Canadian troops.¹⁷³ Minto, who believed that improving Canada's defence system was a central part of his gubernatorial duty to protect imperial interests, increasingly supported Hutton's crusade, expressing his hope to Chamberlain that by forcing Laurier's government to recognise the damage it had done to the militia they would end political patronage.¹⁷⁴ Both men were being overly optimistic, as Morton argues that while no one disagreed in principle, in practice officers continued to carry their grievances through political channels.¹⁷⁵ Political control over military patronage had become so ingrained it was believed that officers gave a higher priority to their 'political pull' than their professional development when attempting to gain advancement, making it virtually impossible for two men, however energetic or committed, to overcome it. Despite his technical and administrative successes, Hutton became increasingly discouraged about the chances of repairing the damage done to the efficiency and discipline of the militia by the political interference and party intrigue which controlled promotions and appointments, and came to recognise why it had caused such problems for his predecessors.¹⁷⁶ The trouble caused by attempts to remove the Liberal MP/militia officer Domville from his command amply demonstrated the difficulties Hutton and Minto faced.

Chamberlain, anxious to further his own plans for imperial federation, believed the circumstances fully justified Hutton's frank speaking on the subject and promised to support the GOC.¹⁷⁷ Others closer to the situation believed that Hutton's aggressive approach, forgetting the notorious sensitivity of colonial governments about matters they

¹⁷² NLS, MS 12582, '4th Earl of Minto,' pp. 250-53; BL Add Mss 50113, pp. 130ff.

¹⁷³ *LMCP I*, Hutton to Minto, 20 November 1898, p. 16.

¹⁷⁴ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 6 January 1899, pp. 28-29.

¹⁷⁵ Morton, *Canada and War*, p. 37.

¹⁷⁶ BL Add Mss 50078, Hutton to Chamberlain, 20 February 1899; Add Mss 50085, Hutton to Wolseley, 12 February 1899; Add Mss 50087, Hutton to Harrison, 8 June 1899, Hutton to Nathan, 9 January 1899.

¹⁷⁷ BL Add Mss 50078, Chamberlain to Hutton, 14 March 1899.

controlled, jeopardised the small advances they had made. Minto recognised that a more pragmatic approach was necessary, and that while they must take advantage of any opportunities presented, it was dangerous to coerce Laurier's government. He intimated to Lansdowne his fears that the militia was a 'powder magazine' which could be ignited if Hutton said too much at a public occasion, undermining Canada's political stability.¹⁷⁸ Borden supported plans to improve the militia, but feared Hutton's public speeches were damaging these efforts and that attempts to separate the militia from politics or stop civil encroachment into military responsibilities masked a desire to make the GOC the dominant power, which no colonial government could tolerate.¹⁷⁹ Outside the militia a belief became prevalent that as it highlighted discrimination against Conservatives, Hutton's crusade was aimed against Laurier's government and its dominant French element, which could not be trusted to reform the militia or support imperialist policies. Hutton, although not particularly enamoured of the Liberals, was equally critical of the Conservatives, and hoped that he could appeal to French martial traditions to end Quebec's apathy towards the militia and use it as a force for national unity.¹⁸⁰

These prompts went unheeded and Hutton became 'increasingly audacious in his speeches,'¹⁸¹ until going too far in April 1899. Seymour urged the GOC not to 'jeopardise the immense influence you are gaining every day,' by adopting the risky strategy of appealing to the public to support his 'mission' to improve Canada's military forces, as some of Laurier's government were 'too democratic to stand too stiff a dose of Militarism administered by their own officer.' Indeed, Borden had asked Seymour to stress to Hutton that 'the ministry were afraid of your speeches in the country urging too much or more than they were prepared to support you on.' While he stressed to the government that Hutton was an experienced officer devoted to improving the militia, Seymour urged the GOC to remember he had to work with the Dominion authorities and downplay references about his mission for Britain.¹⁸² Little heed was paid to Seymour's warnings. Minto did not feel the incident warranted mention to Chamberlain or Wolseley, and believed that Hutton's popularity with press, public and both political parties had strengthened his

¹⁷⁸ *LMCP I*, Minto to Lansdowne, 27 January 1899, p. 32.

¹⁷⁹ Morton, *Canada and War*, p.37; Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, pp.143-148.

¹⁸⁰ BL Add Mss 50087, Hutton to Harrison 27 July 1899; NLS MS 12582, '4th Earl of Minto,' pp. 245-247; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 147-148.

¹⁸¹ Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 144-148.

¹⁸² *LMCP I*, Seymour to Minto, 14 April 1899, pp. 52-53; BL Add Mss 50088, Seymour to Hutton, 13 April 1899.

position to the extent that his views would do little harm if not pushed too forcefully.¹⁸³ Hutton confirmed that he was committed to serving Canadian interests; it was up to the Government and electorate to decide whether to accept his recommendations. He had merely tried to correct the erroneous impression of his views created by the ‘disgraceful’ reporting of his speeches, but he also argued that the only opportunity for success was to educate public opinion in Canada as he had done in Australia, as widespread popular support would encourage an opportunist colonial government to act on his suggestions. Hutton recognised that the ‘difficulty is to go in advance just so far as to lead as to be followed, and not so far as to frighten or bewilder those who should follow!’ His views, however, illustrate a common British failing in seeing the self-governing colonies as a homogeneous, monolithic whole, and an inability to appreciate even the obvious differences between them, let alone the subtleties.¹⁸⁴

Nationalist historians praise Borden and Laurier for ‘having the backbone to resist the pretensions of imperial officers who came to Canada filled with the notion that it was their function to govern the country.’¹⁸⁵ Yet other historians are more accurate in recognising that Hutton’s ‘apostolic zeal’ and ‘secularised evangelism’, proved both irresistible in the jingoistic atmosphere created by tensions with America, and highly disturbing to a government at best reluctant to strengthen imperial ties.¹⁸⁶ In one sense Minto was fortunate in having a proactive associate in the early stages of his Canadian career, able to take advantage of latent popular imperialism to focus attention on the defensive frailties which Britain aimed to alleviate. Hutton’s overzealous public espousal of potentially controversial views illuminated the first signs of strains in his relationship with both his Canadian employers, who disliked his militaristic tones, and some of his colleagues, who just disliked him. Sharp deterioration over the next few months would occur as issues central to the civil-military balance and relations within the Empire came to the fore. Hutton had put himself on a collision course with the ministers, and as Wade puts it ‘these minor difficulties were soon to create major ones,’¹⁸⁷ which would prove a valuable learning experience for Minto, who came to appreciate the advantages offered by a pragmatic approach.

¹⁸³ *LMCP I*, Minto to Seymour, 18 April 1899, Minto to Chamberlain, 18 April 1899, Minto to Wolseley, 21 April 1899, pp. 53-59.

¹⁸⁴ BL Add Mss 50088, Hutton to Seymour, 18 April 1899.

¹⁸⁵ Stevens & Saywell, *LMCP*, pp. l-liii.

¹⁸⁶ Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 147-148.

¹⁸⁷ Wade, *French-Canadians*, p. 477.

Minto and Curzon's Legacy

A tendency to regard Curzon as not only the greatest Viceroy, but also Britain's greatest proconsul, persists in popular accounts of the Empire.¹⁸⁸ More academic interpretations have recognised that he provoked vociferous criticism from many contemporaries,¹⁸⁹ and most would have agreed with Ferguson's comment that Curzon 'was a most insufferable man.'¹⁹⁰ Few, however, would have gone to the same extreme as Kitson, who gleefully recounted to Minto that 'when they told Ayub Khan the other day of Lord Curzon's accident he said "how sorry everyone must be that he wasn't killed", and then he spat loudly!!!'¹⁹¹

Curzon was distinctive amongst proconsuls, 'not least because he was more than many of his contemporaries a consciously ideological imperialist rather than a pragmatist,'¹⁹² who believed passionately in the civilising mission of Britain's Empire. He was strongly identified with the 'new imperialism' of the late Victorian era and provided the most vivid demonstrations of its philosophy.¹⁹³ Curzon arrived in India determined to improve its administration, and he undoubtedly possessed the intelligence and capacity for hard work required to fulfil such an imposing task. He aimed not only to accelerate decision-making, but to treat Indians with justice, an essential part of efficient government in his view.¹⁹⁴ Although his eventful tenure could boast many achievements, it can be argued that he failed conspicuously in as many areas. His relations with colleagues and subordinates in India, his superiors in Britain, and the Indians over whom he ruled were often troubled, and these difficulties ultimately terminated his Viceroyalty. Contempt for the abilities of British officials in India led him to supervise even the minutest details of the administration, while refusing to delegate any responsibility. Supporters in Britain became concerned about the friction he created:

¹⁸⁸ Lee, *This Sceptred Isle*, pp. 214ff; A. Roberts, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples since 1900* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2006), pp. 59-62; Gilmour, *Curzon*, passim.

¹⁸⁹ Dilks, *Curzon in India, Vols. I & II*; N. Goradia, *Lord Curzon: The Last of the British Moghuls* (OUP, Delhi, 1993).

¹⁹⁰ Ferguson, *Empire*, p. 204.

¹⁹¹ NLS MS 12402, Lord Minto's Miscellaneous Correspondence, January 1907 to December 1908, Kitson to Minto, 1 October 1908.

¹⁹² Brown, *Modern India*, pp. 106-107; D. Judd, *The Lion and the Tiger: The Rise and Fall of the British Raj* (OUP, Oxford, 2004), pp. 101ff; D. Judd, *Empire* (Harper Collins, London, 1996), pp. 176, 236ff.

¹⁹³ T.R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 167-68; Judd, *Lion and the Tiger*, pp. 101ff; Porter, *Lion's Share*, pp. 181-91.

¹⁹⁴ Dilks *Curzon in India I*, passim; Gilmour, *Curzon*, pp. 149-63, 204-24; Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, pp. 185-86; Porter, *Lion's Share*, pp. 181-91.

Hamilton did not blind himself to Curzon's failings. 'It is such a pity [Hamilton wrote]...[that] when he has such a rare power of work, ability and go that he should so rub up the people around him!'

Curzon's ability increasingly became 'warped by his growing sense of self-importance.'¹⁹⁵ While some historians are willing to excuse these faults as the idiosyncrasies of genius, others are far more scathing of Curzon's relationship with his Indian colleagues. Judd criticised Curzon as a sadistic tormentor who mercilessly bullied his subordinates:

When he finally left for home in 1905, it was claimed that there was hardly any Indian official of any standing he had not personally insulted and confronted – from the iconic, brooding, world-famous Kitchener to relatively junior members of the ICS.

His reforming zeal and energy 'had been wasted in high profile and enervating disputes.'¹⁹⁶

Curzon's refusal to accept his constitutional subordination to Whitehall, and his tendency to treat them as inferiors, made for a turbulent relationship. The departures of Salisbury and Hamilton removed two restraining influences on the impetuous Viceroy, and matters rapidly deteriorated during Brodrick's tenure at the India Office until relations between London and Calcutta resembled those of rival states, rather than complementary centres of the same Empire. Foreign affairs proved to be especially troublesome, as Curzon's attempts to dictate policy according to Indian security requirements by extending control over the 'buffer' states threatened to provoke conflict with Russia. His disregard of direct instructions about Tibet infuriated the Cabinet, who increasingly believed that his continuation as Viceroy presented a danger to the safety of the Empire. Curzon became oversensitive to criticism and detached from reality, treating India as his personal fiefdom and reacting with 'self-pitying disbelief' to any frustration, which provoked a sharp rebuke from Balfour, 'you seem to think you are injured whenever you do not get your own way!' Curzon's defenders are equally myopic, constantly blaming the other parties involved for petty disputes; they fail to recognise that the Viceroy represented the common factor. To criticise the Cabinet as 'parochial,' as Edwardes does, for failing to accept Curzon's policy

¹⁹⁵ Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. I*, p. 99.

¹⁹⁶ Judd, *Empire*, p. 176; Judd, *Lion and the Tiger*, pp. 114ff; Goradia, *Curzon*, pp. 197-98.

is unconvincing. The imperial government retained an overall responsibility for the Empire, and had found it necessary to overrule a subordinate when his policy threatened to embroil them in war.¹⁹⁷

Curzon's dismissive attitude towards the aspirations of Indians, and his decision to partition Bengal left a further bitter legacy discontent for his successor. The reality of British India did not conform to the fantasy of a rural idyll that Curzon tried to preserve.¹⁹⁸ Any Indian presumptions that he perceived to conflict with this imperial mission were contemptuously swept aside, and for this reason he rejected Congress claims to represent all Indian interests. Curzon expected to assist its peaceful demise, while rallying loyal elements to the crown, but his policy towards Bengal merely galvanised opposition to British rule. His determination to ignore the agitation partition had provoked strengthened Indian determination to resist a blatant attempt to 'divide and conquer.' Curzon departed from India unable to understand Indian enmity towards him and full of bitterness that his sacrifices had not been appreciated.¹⁹⁹

Limited options complicated the task of finding a suitable successor for Curzon. Some candidates were easily dismissed, lacking the ability required for the post,²⁰⁰ but for various reasons the preferred alternatives were unavailable. Selborne, considered to be Curzon's natural successor, had tired of waiting and opted to go to South Africa instead. Milner had been Brodrick's first choice but the Secretary of State soon glumly reported to Balfour that Milner had 'told me if the offer were made he could not possibly consider it...He is very clear against India,'²⁰¹ desiring above all a period of rest before undertaking another exhausting post in the Empire. Many, however, doubted his suitability for such a sensitive post given the problems he had caused in South Africa and the likelihood of the Liberals soon taking office. His appointment would have been anathema to them, and even

¹⁹⁷ R.J.Q. Adams, *Balfour* (John Murray, London, 2007), pp. 192-98; S. Brodrick, *Records and Reactions, 1856-1939* (John Murray, London, 1939), pp. 186ff; Dilks, *Curzon in India II*, passim; M. Edwardes, *High Noon of Empire* (Eyre & Spottiswood, London, 1965), pp. 217-225; Gilmour, *Curzon*, passim; Goradia, *Curzon*, pp. 228ff; Judd, *Lion and the Tiger*, pp. 114ff; Judd, *Empire*, p. 176; S Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885-1947* (Macmillan, London, 1989), pp. 101-102.

¹⁹⁸ Ferguson, *Empire*, p. 203.

¹⁹⁹ Brown, *Modern India*, pp. 106-7; Das, *India Under Minto and Morley*, pp. 30-45; Edwardes, *High Noon*, pp. 249-58; Goradia, *Curzon*, pp. 210-27; Judd, *Lion and the Tiger*, pp. 114ff.

²⁰⁰ Adonis, *Making Aristocracy Work*, pp. 216ff.

²⁰¹ BL Add Mss 49721, Brodrick to Balfour, 15 August 1905.

some senior Indian officials were apprehensive about the rumours, as Younghusband commented to Minto:

still if he [Curzon] had to go I do not think we in India could possibly have done better than you in his place. I had always hoped that you would come to us but afraid they would send you to South Africa and still more afraid that they would send Lord Milner to India.²⁰²

As had been the case for Canada, Minto was by no means the first choice, but as the alternatives dwindled he became the best man available. During his time in Canada, many of his friends had suggested that Minto would be the perfect candidate for India,²⁰³ but initial hopes had been dashed by the extension of both his and Curzon's terms in 1903. As he had been prior to his appointment to Ottawa Minto was plagued by self-doubt, confiding to his journal his fears that with such a wide field of candidates he lacked the political influence to back him and that the government's tenuous grip on power may end his chances.²⁰⁴ Brodrick believed the choice had been narrowed to two remaining suitable candidates, after being pushed by Balfour to consider Minto's qualifications:

I think Jersey sounder than Minto. There was a little rift in the lute at Ottawa. But Minto is fresher. Jersey is not a certainty, Minto is – the latter has better health – Jersey would keep things quiet and I think he has the ability to deal with the mass of business which I feel pretty sure would puzzle Minto considerably.

As regards fiscal, Jersey's views are more mine than Minto's....But I can work well with either, or indeed with any of the men whose names are mentioned.²⁰⁵

Brodrick obviously did not reveal these doubts to Minto, instead expressing satisfaction that the place had fallen to an old friend.²⁰⁶ Balfour also regretted that the new Viceroy was not more intelligent, but Minto had been chosen for his energy and tact, valuable qualities

²⁰² NLS MS 12399, Lord Minto's Miscellaneous Correspondence, August 1905, Younghusband to Minto, 22 August 1905.

²⁰³ NLS MS 12395, Lord Minto's Miscellaneous Correspondence, January to December 1903, Gascoigne to Minto, 27 March 1903; MS 12397, Lord Minto's Miscellaneous Correspondence, November 1904 to February 1905, Alexander Elliot to Minto, 2 December 1904.

²⁰⁴ NLS MS 12501, Lord Minto's Journal May 1904 to October 1905, 27 June, pp. 88-91, 23 July 1905, pp. 101-103.

²⁰⁵ BL Balfour Papers, Add Mss 49271, Correspondence between A.J. Balfour and St. John Brodrick, August to November 1905, Brodrick to Balfour, 16 August 1905.

²⁰⁶ NLS MS 12787, Lord Minto's Correspondence with St. John Brodrick, August 1905 to November 1908, Brodrick to Minto, 17 August 1905.

in the circumstances, rather than his scholarly aptitude. Minto would probably agree with historical assessments, that while ‘not a remarkable man,’ he was perfect to maintain the status quo.²⁰⁷ Historians arguing that Minto was not clever enough to be Viceroy, that he preferred horses to politics,²⁰⁸ forget that despite their academic brilliance, both Curzon and Milner had turbulent relationships with their superiors. ‘Intelligent’ proconsuls were often more likely to create such difficulties; regarding themselves as superior to leaders in Britain, they became frustrated when their ideas were not accepted and attempted to implement policies on their own initiative with little thought for wider consequences. Outstanding intellect was not a vital qualification for a colonial governor.

‘Imagine sending to succeed *me* a gentleman who only jumps hedges’²⁰⁹ was allegedly Curzon’s indignant reaction upon hearing that Minto would replace him as Viceroy. Others in Britain shared this incredulity, although criticism was aimed more at Balfour’s government than Minto himself, as Churchill claimed that Curzon’s Viceroyalty had been the only thing to enhance their prestige:

The appointment of Minto, poor dear thing, is another piece of Arthurism in excelsis. For cynical disdain of public interests and contempt of public opinion, it exactly matches Brodrick’s appointment to the India Office.²¹⁰

Edward VII was equally unimpressed and felt that Curzon and Minto were as comparable as Pitt and Perceval.²¹¹ Criticism from Canada was more personal, as Dafoe, a Canadian journalist who had frequently attacked Minto in Ottawa at the instigation of his political mentor, claimed that his appointment as Viceroy following his time as Governor undermined ‘the theory that in England considerations of ability alone are regarded in filling public positions.’ Criticism was not universal, and many followed the *Ottawa Journal*’s example in defending Minto, arguing that his ‘present detractors must be forced to admit he is as big a man as either of the other two following the same course.’²¹² Such favourable press comments and the many letters of congratulation Minto received reveal

²⁰⁷ Lee, *Sceptred Isle*, pp. 214ff; Lloyd, *The British Empire*, pp. 267ff.

²⁰⁸ Gilmour, *Curzon*, pp. 368-380; Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 138.

²⁰⁹ Adonis, *Making Aristocracy Work*, p. 218.

²¹⁰ R. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill Vol. II, Companion Part I 1901-1907* (Heinemann, London, 1969) WSC to Lady Randolph, 31 August 1905, p. 401.

²¹¹ Gilmour, *Curzon*, p. 341.

²¹² NLS MS 12400, Lord Minto’s Miscellaneous Correspondence, August to September 1905, Topley to Minto, 7 September 1905, Encl. *Ottawa Journal*, quoting Dafoe’s article from *Winnipeg Free Press*.

why his appointment was welcomed. The experience he had gained of imperial administration in Canada, particularly in dealing with civil-military troubles, when combined with his military background and personal qualities, was believed to make him the ideal candidate to work with India's soldiers who felt they had been slighted by Curzon. Others stressed the simple fact that he was not Curzon, who many identified as the source of India's problems; although it would be difficult to replace him it was hoped that Minto could provide some respite and focus attention on military preparation after the 'excitement' the departing Viceroy had created. As the *Pioneer* commented Minto was 'neither a prominent politician nor a great man,' he was rather 'a capable administrator with a good record,' and this had influenced the Cabinet's decision to appoint him. The difficulties Curzon had caused created a desire to replace this ambitious politician with an aristocratic amateur who would not only provide the prestige required, but would also take a less ideological approach towards ruling Britain's most important imperial possession. Beyond upholding the totemic principle that Indian defence had to remain the Viceroy's paramount priority, Minto was expected to continue the pragmatic methods he had adopted in Canada and restore the proper relationship between London and Simla by recognising that he served the imperial government as an administrator and was not an independent ruler.²¹³

Selborne, although arguing that Curzon's work had been brilliant and deserved to endure despite his disagreement with Kitchener, did admit that Minto's arrival in India would be an awkward moment.²¹⁴ His prediction proved prescient as the handover of power created a most unfortunate impression on Minto. Balfour and Brodrick became increasingly anxious to remove Curzon as quickly as possible after his resignation; the latter stated to Minto that '*I do not think Curzon's continuance in India at all advisable.*'²¹⁵ Concerns that unnecessary delay in the changeover was interfering with vital work relating to military reform and Bengali unrest were overruled by Edward VII's insistence that the departing Viceroy receive the forthcoming royal visit as a fitting close to his official career. Minto, however, became apprehensive that failing to immediately introduce him as Viceroy on

²¹³ See the correspondence in NLS MS 12398, Lord Minto's Miscellaneous Correspondence, March to August 1905, MS 12399 (particularly Chief Justice Maclean to Minto, 24 August 1905 encl. *Pioneer* 23 August 1905), MS 12400 and MS 12401, Lord Minto's Miscellaneous Correspondence, September 1905 to December 1906.

²¹⁴ NLS MS 12400, Selborne to Minto, 6 September 1905.

²¹⁵ NLS MS 12787, Brodrick to Minto, 5 September 1905. See also BL Add Mss 49271, Brodrick to Balfour, 2 & 4 September 1905.

arriving in India carried the risk of him being belittled.²¹⁶ Brodrick shared this viewpoint, writing to Balfour that:

I think the King in his desire to exalt Curzon loses sight of the effect on Minto's position...The fact, which I put strongly before him [Edward VII], that Indian business owing to Curzon's remaining so long after his resignation is getting into hopeless arrears does not weigh with him, compared to the 'show' business...[the] position of Minto will be a very undesirable one.²¹⁷

To Brodrick's annoyance royal intervention ensured the arrangement of a compromise, allowing the tour to proceed and for Minto to arrive with minimal damage to the Viceregal office. Minto commented that 'the whole situation has been most troublesome to everyone,'²¹⁸ but unfortunately for him it would soon get far worse. Expecting the proper ceremonial handover of power, he was astonished to be greeted informally by an inappropriately attired Curzon in a brief civic ceremony. Some historians have attributed the difficulties to 'a genuine misunderstanding,' and those writing soon after the event were unwilling to blame Curzon.²¹⁹ Others were less forgiving. Indian opinion was indignant at the apparent slight, and even some usually staunch defenders believe Curzon had taken great satisfaction from the public humiliation of the government's new representative.²²⁰ His petulance cost him valuable support, as Edward VII shared the outrage many had voiced: 'what can you expect from a man who is not a gentleman. Have you ever known him to do the right thing?'²²¹

The departing Viceroy had unwisely taken his anger at Balfour's government out on an essentially innocent bystander, failing to realise that Minto, modest about his own talents and apprehensive about the immense task he faced, was particularly sensitive to any suggestion that he was being disparaged.²²² Minto was never able to forgive Curzon for this public insult, and the 'truly regrettable' affair, compounded by Curzon's failure to offer any apology, coloured his subsequent interpretation of his predecessor's legacy,

²¹⁶ NLS MS 12787, Brodrick to Minto, 28 August 1905, Minto to Brodrick, 18 September 1905.

²¹⁷ BL Add Mss 49271, Brodrick to Balfour, 17 September 1905.

²¹⁸ NLS MS 12401, Brodrick to Minto, 26 & 27 September 1905, Minto to Brodrick, 26 & 27 September 1905.

²¹⁹ Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. II*, p. 246; Buchan, *Lord Minto*, pp. 216-217.

²²⁰ M.C. Elliot (Lady Minto), *India, Minto and Morley* (Macmillan, London, 1934), pp. 10-12; Edwardes, *High Noon*, pp. 238-245; Goradia, *Curzon*, p. 241.

²²¹ Gilbert, *Servant of India*, Dunlop Smith to Lady Minto, 12 July 1908, pp. 163-167.

²²² Das, *Minto and Morley*, p. 47.

illustrated by his comments to Brodrick that ‘I have very sadly come to the conclusion that what occurred has been due to Curzon’s intense vanity.’²²³ Gilmour criticises Minto for developing a dangerous obsession with his predecessor, due to petty jealousy of Curzon’s achievements. In his view Minto’s weak government, not Curzon was to blame for India’s unrest,²²⁴ but he ignores the contemporary argument that Minto was forced to reap the whirlwind sown by Curzon’s policies. Curzon’s continued attempts to interfere in Indian politics and influence press opinion infuriated Minto, and made his task of repairing the damage caused by his illustrious predecessor that more difficult. Minto’s letters to his wife are full of comments about Curzon’s machinations, ‘I honestly believe he has worked through the press and in other ways to discredit me.’ He remained determined, however, to ignore such provocations, concluding that ‘one can only run straight and leave him to run as he likes.’ The insensitivity towards Indian opinion and the difficulties he had created for former colleagues indicated by suggestions like that to create a memorial for Clive led Minto to privately question his predecessor’s mental stability: ‘there is only one excuse for such action viz. that he is mad.’²²⁵

While contemporary writers like Buchan and Lady Minto avoided being overcritical of Curzon, they hint at the many problems Minto encountered on arrival as a result of his policies. Curzon’s drive for efficiency had produced only dissatisfaction. Too much work had been concentrated in viceregal hands, leaving him to deal with a ‘mass of inessential detail’ instead of providing the strategic direction expected of him. A refusal to delegate had stripped senior officials of power and responsibility. Minto recognised that he could not match Curzon’s power of work; his Canadian experience encouraged the adoption of a different style of leadership, where government was an exercise in cooperation rather than a dictatorship. Accordingly, responsibility and initiative were restored to the Executive Council, allowing the Viceroy to focus on larger questions of policy.²²⁶ By appointing Minto the government aimed to restore the shattered prestige of India’s government and recover the internal harmony lost during the bitter divisions caused by the Curzon-Kitchener feud and the humiliating spectacle caused by public washing of official linen.

²²³ NLS MS 12735, Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, November 1905 to June 1906, Minto to Brodrick, 21 November 1905; MS 12416, Lord Minto’s Correspondence with Lady Minto, 1904 to 1907, Minto to Lady Minto, 5 June 1907; Gilmour, *Curzon*, pp. 368-380.

²²⁴ Gilmour, *Curzon*, pp. 368-80.

²²⁵ NLS MS 12416, Minto to Lady Minto, 15 April, 15 May & 5 June 1907; MS 12417, Lord Minto’s Correspondence with Lady Minto, 1908 to 1912, Minto to Lady Minto, 19 & 25 March, 9 April 1908; MS 12787, Brodrick to Minto, 25 February & 28 May 1907.

²²⁶ Buchan, *Lord Minto*, p. 218; Lady Minto, *India, Minto and Morley*, p. 4.

Minto was unfortunate to have succeeded one of the most disliked men in modern Indian history whose qualities as a 'Herculean administrator' did little to compensate for his failings. Curzon was arrogant, overbearing and indifferent to human circumstances.²²⁷ As Minto put it 'how intensely Curzon's egotism (I can call it nothing else) and ambitions have shed their influence over public life in India...'²²⁸ Many contemporaries were glad to be rid of the hated viceroy, whose failure to appreciate the difficulties caused by his policies had left a heritage of discontent to be faced by his successor.²²⁹

Unfortunately for Minto Curzon had destroyed the traditional Indian relationship with Britain. The ideal of the Government of India as a great quasi-independent power negotiating on equal terms was now wholly impracticable, and this was to prove a spectre that would haunt Minto's relationship with Morley.²³⁰ Minto complained about Curzon's attacks on his government, annoyed that things would be very different if people knew the truth:

Much as one may wish to do so one can hardly treat Curzon's actions as mere trivialities, for it is impossible to disguise from oneself that he means to lose no chance of throwing mud at my administration. I have committed the crime of succeeding him, and he cannot forget it...If a true history of Curzon's rule is ever written, it will make the world wonder. Few people at home know the legacy of bitter discontent he left for his successor...He has never ceased to blow his own trumpet, though a knowledge of his life as seen from behind the scenes here would make people's hair stand on end...²³¹

Reopening communication between rulers and ruled after the resentment provoked by Curzon's lack of sympathy with Indian opinion, demonstrated most obviously by the partition of Bengal, was another problem it became vital for Minto to address. He adopted a more sympathetic and modest approach in comparison to the disdain which had characterised Curzon's attitude, and showed a willingness to listen to the previously ignored complaints of India's educated classes. Minto believed that this could only be taken so far, given the unrealistic ambitions inspired in part by the growth of western

²²⁷ H. Tinker, 'Power and Influence in Britain and India' *MAS* 2 (1968), p. 75.

²²⁸ NLS MS 12735, Minto to Morley 20 December 1905.

²²⁹ Gilbert, *Servant of India*, Cornelia Sorabji to Lady Antrim, 28 May 1910, pp. 231-233.

²³⁰ NLS MS 12400, Minto to Chamberlain, 31 August 1905; Das, *Minto and Morley*, pp. 46-60; Gilbert, *Servant of India*, pp. 3-6, 23ff, 250-253.

²³¹ NLS MS 12737, Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, 1907, Minto to Morley 12 Sept 1907 (quoted in Das, *Minto and Morley*, pp. 73-74).

education and Japan's recent victory.²³² While he hoped to provide employment opportunities and recognised the importance of Congress, he resolutely refused to strike at the heart of nationalist grievance by overturning partition. Minto feared that any such decision at the very start of his tenure would be taken, not as the perfect illustration of the new-found sympathy guiding British policy, but as weakness in the face of unrest, thus creating a dangerous precedent. Instead, the restoration of order became the necessary quid pro quo for any reforms, but the spark of nationalist agitation had been lit, and much of Minto's time in India was spent in battling its more violent manifestations, while challenging a perceived British willingness to ignore the advice of the 'man on the spot,' to the detriment of imperial security.²³³

Curzon's defence and external policies provided an equally troublesome legacy, although one that is relatively neglected by historians. In Tibet, Curzon's paranoid Russophobia produced an ill-judged adventurist policy that achieved little beyond souring his relationship with a Cabinet infuriated by his insubordination and encouraging China to reassert their authority over what they regarded as sovereign territory. Tibet remained a thorn in India's side for much of Minto's tenure, provoking a minor crisis on the eve of his departure that briefly threatened escalation requiring military intervention.²³⁴ But this was tame compared to the problems Minto faced on the North West Frontier, where Curzon had introduced much-vaunted reforms to reorganise the government's structure and withdraw the majority of regular troops. Curzon and Kitchener's government, in considering tribal policy almost solely in the context of war with Russia, proved the exception rather than the rule of Indian approaches to the turbulent North West Frontier. Most of their predecessors had regarded the tribes as posing a threat to Indian security independent of the machinations of rival Great Powers. Finding a solution to the difficulties created by the presence of a large, well-armed, warlike and religiously fanatical

²³² See for example S.G. Marks, "'Bravo Brave Tiger of the East!'" The Russo-Japanese War and the Rise of Nationalism in British Egypt and India' in J.W. Steinberg, et al (eds.), *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective; World War Zero* (Brill, Boston, 2006), pp. 609-628; B. Chandramohan "'Hamlet with the Prince of Denmark left out?': The South African War, Empire and India' in Lowry (ed.), *South African War Reappraised*, pp. 150-168.

²³³ For paragraph Das, *Minto and Morley*, passim; Gilbert, *Servant of India*, passim; Koss, *Morley at the India Office*, passim; Tinker, 'Power and Influence', pp. 75ff; Wasti, *Lord Minto*, pp. 3-4, 26ff; Wolpert, *Morley and India*, passim. Contemporary discussion of the problem caused by agitation over Bengal can be found in Minto's correspondence with Morley.

²³⁴ Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. I*, pp. 162-196, *Vol. II*, pp. 74-101; Edwardes, *High Noon*, pp. 184-193, 217-22; Gilmour, *Curzon*, pp. 273-291; Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon Vol. II* (Ernest Benn, London, 1928), pp. 272-280, 340-348. For the later period, 1905-1910, see Siegel, *Endgame*, and I. Klein, 'The Anglo-Russian Convention and the Problem of Central Asia, 1907-1914' *JBS 11* (1971), pp. 126-147.

population on a strategically important frontier occupied much time and effort, but ultimately the problem proved insoluble.

Curzon's attempt to claim all the credit for introducing the new policy provoked derision from Dunlop Smith:

I was amused at Lord Curzon's statement that he hoped the new frontier policy introduced in 1899 would be adhered to. As a matter of fact no new policy was then introduced. The lines of frontier policy were laid down by Lord George Hamilton in 1898. As a consequence of that policy Lord Elgin started the idea of gradually withdrawing troops and substituting for them tribal levies to do the police work of the frontier. This idea Lord Curzon took up and made it his own.²³⁵

The struggle to overcome tribal resistance during the 1897-98 uprising provided the impetus for a much-needed reconsideration of frontier policy. Respect for tribal independence had not prevented aggression, while punitive expeditions in response to raids merely left a legacy of hatred for the mullahs to exploit.²³⁶ Military suggestions to ensure pacification of the region and extend British control by occupying tribal territory were swiftly rejected,²³⁷ as Elgin refused to countenance any adoption of new responsibilities or territorial annexations. Instead troops would be concentrated in fortifications at key strategic points, supported by tribal irregulars and moveable columns. Although he criticised his predecessor for being the puppet of soldiers and lacking ideas or initiative, Curzon's policy was guided by these basic principles.²³⁸

Concerned by the Punjab's inefficient handling of a sensitive area, the British authorities were anxious for Simla to assume control of frontier policy and charged Curzon with overseeing the handover.²³⁹ Curzon's underlying aim in reforming frontier policy, which

²³⁵ NLS MS 12776, Correspondence between the Viceroy and Persons in Great Britain and Abroad, September 1905 to July 1908, Dunlop Smith to Wheeler 2 March 1908; Buchan, *Lord Minto*, pp. 213, 267ff.

²³⁶ NLS MS 12602, A Note on the Military Policy of India (Revised) By His Excellency Lord Kitchener 25 August 1906, pp. 40ff.

²³⁷ NLS MS 12498, Lord Minto's Journal, February 1898 to September 1900, 7 & 8 March 1898; MS 12602, Note by Sir George White, 22 October 1897, p. 43; Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. I*, pp. 224-230; A. Swinson, *North West Frontier* (Hutchison, London, 1967), pp. 253-254.

²³⁸ R. Hyam, *Elgin and Churchill at the Colonial Office 1905-1908* (Macmillan, London, 1968), pp. 21-26; Ronaldshay, *Lord Curzon*, pp. 39-42.

²³⁹ Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. I*, pp. 224-230.

he viewed as deeply flawed, was ‘not to prevent war by preparing for it, [but] to produce peace by creating the requisite conditions,’ and he summarised his policy thus,

In all cases the principle is the same and is one of general application along the frontier, as well as of practical wisdom. We remove our own soldiers from exacting and distasteful service, for which they are not in all cases suited. By relieving the Indian Army from the task of garrisoning and defending these outlying positions, we render it possible, when war breaks out on or beyond the frontier, to concentrate the great mass of our troops on the principal lines of advance. By enrolling the local garrisons as levies, or militia, or police, we avoid the publicity that attaches to any proceedings of the regular army on the frontier, while, in the event of any contretemps, we escape the commotion and reproach that are invariably excited by military disaster. Finally, we take into our pay, and thereby acquire a hold upon the allegiance of, the tribesmen, who, while their local patriotism is conciliated by employment as the guardians of their native hills and vales, develop at the same time, under the influence of quasi-military discipline, and ever-increasing loyalty to the British Raj.²⁴⁰

Despite criticism, there was no desire for territorial aggrandisement. Proposals from his military advisers, whom Curzon regarded as ‘incurable bunglers,’²⁴¹ for expensive fortifications capable of resisting Russian attack at key points along the frontier were dismissed as it was feared these would only provoke tribal and Afghan aggression. Curzon believed isolated stations actually posed a danger to Britain’s position, rather than enhancing security:

We desire to avoid locking up regular garrisons in costly fortified positions at a distance from our base, where the troops are practically lost to the offensive strength of India, and in time of emergency, would probably require additional forces to be detached from the Indian Army for their protection.²⁴²

Around 11,000 regulars were withdrawn from the tribal region and concentrated at new bases inside the administrative frontier from where they could easily advance in event of trouble. To replace these troops, and interest the tribes in defending and preserving order within their territory, irregular forces under British officers were created. Tribal maliks

²⁴⁰ NLS MS 12591, Summary of the Administration of Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Foreign Department Vol. II North West Frontier and Baluchistan, pp. 1-3.

²⁴¹ Gilmour, *Curzon*, p. 191.

²⁴² NLS MS 12591, p. 1; C.C. Davies, ‘The North-West Frontier, 1843-1918’ in Dodwell, (ed.) *The Cambridge History of the British Empire Vol. V The Indian Empire 1858-1918*, pp. 466-468.

were granted allowances to maintain these forces, in the hope that secure employment with regular pay would reduce the need for raiding, thus revolutionising the atmosphere on the frontier.²⁴³

Both the military authorities and frontier officials increasingly came to support his ideas.²⁴⁴ Ending the inefficient practice of scattering regular troops across the frontier furthered Kitchener's reforms:

No one recognises more fully than myself the waste of good military material which is involved by locking up in detached and isolated posts on the frontier units of our regular army. It is a frittering away of our strength which I regard as deplorable.²⁴⁵

The Khyber saw the most successful implementation of Curzon's policy. Plans for a railway and an elaborate new fort were dropped to avoid providing potential hostages for the tribes in the event of risings. Instead the existing defensible serai was strengthened, to be held by the newly formed Khyber Rifles, recruited from among the Afridis, which proved to be an efficient and loyal force.²⁴⁶ Universal application, however, proved impossible, as certain regions were regarded as unsuitable for immediate transfer to tribal responsibility. Regulars were retained in the large fort on the Samana Ridge, which Curzon could never persuade his military authorities to evacuate, convinced as they were that the handing over of a key military position on one of the main lines of advance into Afghanistan to a potentially unreliable tribal militia was an unnecessary risk unless their conditions for the stationing of a large regular force at nearby Miranzai and the completion of railway construction were met. Curzon reluctantly deferred to the views of his military advisers, and this proved to be one occasion where political principles were sacrificed to military expediency.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ NLS MS 12591, pp. 1-5; NLS, MS 12600, Summary Administration of Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy and Governor-General of India in the Military Department (1907), pp. 39ff; Davies, 'North-West Frontier', pp. 466-468; T.D. Farrell, 'The Founding of the North West Frontier Militias' *Asian Affairs* (1972), pp. 169ff; Gilmour, *Curzon*, pp. 191-198; Ronaldshay, *Lord Curzon*, pp. 39-42.

²⁴⁴ NLS, MS 12591, p.1; Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. I*, pp. 224-230; Edwardes, *High Noon*, pp. 57-71; Ronaldshay, *Lord Curzon*, pp. 41-2.

²⁴⁵ NLS MS 12601, Record of Lord Kitchener's Administration of the Army in India, 1902-1909, p. 320.

²⁴⁶ NLS MS 12591, pp. 29-30; NLS, MS 12600, pp. 41-43.

²⁴⁷ NLS MS 12591, pp. 34-36; NLS, MS 12600, pp. 43-49.

To complement military changes Curzon aimed to make frontier administration more efficient by creating new structures that would increase Simla's direct control over the frontier.²⁴⁸ Its tactless introduction, particularly Curzon's willingness to insult local officials by stressing the need for more intelligent officers, and the resultant friction with the Punjab did little to aid its implementation. Curzon stressed that Simla had no sinister intentions in establishing the new province, but it was necessary for the Indian Government to enforce its authority directly and thus business had to be conducted more efficiently:

It was because we thought that the peace and tranquillity and contentment of the Frontier were of such importance that they ought to be under the direct eye of the Government of India, and of its head, instead of somebody else.²⁴⁹

The Viceroy's responsibility for India's foreign policy made it necessary to increase his power over its implementation in a region where it could have consequences for wider international relations rather than relying on a parochial provincial administration. Although worked by officials devoted to their duty, the system had long been condemned by authorities on frontier affairs, as its procrastination had often resulted in delays when rapid reaction was essential. This weakness, which had threatened to jeopardise frontier security, was now removed, enabling the implementation of a consistent frontier policy, and increasing Simla's freedom of action.²⁵⁰

Curzon believed he had successfully brought peace and tranquillity to the frontier where so many of his predecessors had failed, and he frequently boasted about what his policy had achieved. He was not, however, afraid to warn the tribes that their newly granted responsibility must not be exploited as the consequences of continued lawlessness or religious fanaticism would be severe: 'if you dart out from behind the shelter of the door to harass and pillage and slay, then you must not be surprised if we return quickly and batter

²⁴⁸ Edwardes, *High Noon*, pp. 57-71; Farrell, 'Frontier Militias,' p.168; Gilmour, *Curzon*, pp. 191-198; Ronaldshay, *Lord Curzon*, pp. 39-42, 131-142.

²⁴⁹ NLS MS 12591, p. 21.

²⁵⁰ NLS MS 12588, Summary of the Administration of Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy and Governor-General of India in the Home Department, p. 2; NLS, MS 12591, pp. 14-19; Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. I*, pp. 224-230; Edwardes, *High Noon*, pp. 110-120; Gilmour, *Curzon*, p. 197; M. O'Dwyer, *India as I Knew It* (Constable, London, 1925), pp. 104ff; Ronaldshay, *Lord Curzon*, pp. 131-139; Swinson, *North West Frontier*, pp. 257-260.

the door in.’²⁵¹ On departing India, Curzon made it clear that he regarded the peace he had established on the frontier as one of his greatest successes:

The creation of the new administration has been justified by its results: for by substituting direct, decisive expeditious methods for vacillation, divided authority, and delay it has not only given unprecedented tranquillity to the North West Frontier territories of India, but has immeasurably strengthened the Government in the presence of ultimate political contingencies. The decision may indeed be regarded with satisfaction as the effective solution of a problem which had baffled successive Governments for 25 years.²⁵²

More material economic benefits, highlighted by comparisons with Elgin’s tenure, had resulted from Curzon’s policy. From 1894-99, £4.5 million had been spent on frontier campaigns, but during the seven years of Curzon’s Viceroyalty, as only minor operations, such as the Mahsud blockade, had been necessary, this figure had been reduced to £248,000.²⁵³ But Curzon was reluctant to measure success in such vulgar terms, and for him the greatest achievement was ‘the spirit of increasing harmony and contentment among the tribes and...the relations that are growing up along the entire border.’²⁵⁴

Unsurprisingly, Curzon’s biographers accept his claims at face value, believing his reforms had established peace and reduced tribal violence. Edwardes argues that Curzon’s policy had ‘inserted the keystone into the frontier arch,’ and although admitting that Curzon never claimed that it would settle all the frontier’s problems, it did give India a longer period of freedom from border warfare than it had ever known before. Opponents of the scheme had been proved wrong, as it had not plunged India into a second Tirah.²⁵⁵ It could alternatively be argued that the reduced British military presence in the region was not the result of some ‘Curzonian’ miracle, but was made possible by favourable circumstances. Large numbers of troops were stationed in the frontier to prevent any resurgence of violence, but as the tribes were exhausted after their major uprising, this was an unlikely occurrence. Curzon merely took advantage of the golden opportunity with

²⁵¹ NLS MS 12591, pp. 18-22.

²⁵² NLS MS 12588, p. 2.

²⁵³ Quoted in Swinson, *North West Frontier*, p. 261.

²⁵⁴ NLS MS 12591, p. 2.

²⁵⁵ Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. I*, pp. 224-230; Edwardes, *High Noon*, pp. 110-120.

which he had been presented. Little doubt exists that in the event of an emergency, troops would have been sent back in massive numbers.

Contemporary officials cast doubt on the veracity of Curzon's vainglorious claims for the success of his policy. Many echo O'Dwyer's views that no 'spirit of harmony and contentment' materialised to replace the continued, everyday occurrences of murders and raids, and that life in the cantonments became no more secure. Indeed one concluded that 'the Curzon policy advanced our relations [with the tribes] not one whit.'²⁵⁶ Minto was preoccupied in his first months as Viceroy with the debate over frontier policy as yet another dangerous legacy bestowed by Curzon was discovered. Initially comments focused on the continued progress made with implementing Curzon's policy, particularly the withdrawal of regular troops and their replacement by tribal militias. As yet no judgement was made of the value of the policy, although some of his erstwhile allies believed it merely needed time to prove its worth.²⁵⁷ It became evident that Curzon's reforms were not as efficient as had been claimed, and Minto grew increasingly angry that frontier difficulties, actually the result of a policy for which he was not responsible, were being ascribed to mismanagement on his part. The militias were not all reliable and the dangers that some had predicted were being realised. Affection for the policy was not alone a viable justification for its continuation. It soon transpired that Curzon had discouraged officials from giving unfavourable reports to produce a more impressive image of his policy, and thus prove that the presence of troops beyond the administrative frontier was unnecessary. The prevalent belief amongst the military authorities that to ensure the efficiency of the militias they should have been supported by regulars for much longer had been vindicated by reports that sepoys from the Kharlachi post had robbed and murdered traders. Minto felt they needed to be prepared with other measures in the event of a breakdown in the system.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ O'Dwyer, *India as I Knew It*, pp. 105, 109; Swinson, *North West Frontier*, p. 262.

²⁵⁷ NLS MS 12676, Army Department Summary of the Principal Events and Measures During the Viceroyalty of Lord Minto from November 1905 to November 1910, p. 51; MS 12764, Correspondence between the Viceroy and Persons in India, November 1905 to June 1906, Dane to Minto, 3 February 1906.

²⁵⁸ NLS MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 20 December 1905 & 1 February 1906; MS 12634, Summary of the Principal Events and Measures of the Viceroyalty of H.E. the Earl of Minto, Viceroy and Governor General of India from November 1905 to July 1910, Vol. I Afghanistan, North West Frontier, Chinese Turkestan and Gilgit Agency, pp. 30-31.

Godley, concerned by the serious state of affairs on the frontier indicated by the high incidence of raids reported during 1905, requested further details on the practice of covering up incidents.²⁵⁹ The report, a catalogue of murder and mayhem across the frontier during Curzon's Viceroyalty, provided the true picture of his policy. Incidents ranging from the theft of rifles to large-scale attacks on Indian Army positions had been recorded, but the reality was even worse:

This list is far from complete, as in some cases, raids committed in the administered districts are not reported in the Political Divisions and consequently not recorded in the Intelligence Branch.²⁶⁰

Astonished by the report, Minto believed it

Appeared to indicate, during the period in question, that a state of disturbance existed on the Northern part of the border which was rare even in the history of the North West Frontier.

The practice of not recording even large-scale raids or blaming Afghans and claiming the delicate relationship with the Amir would be damaged by publicising them suggested the existence of a deliberate policy to present a more favourable impression of Curzon's reforms.²⁶¹ Simla reassured Morley, suspicious that this evidence was being compiled to justify an aggressive policy, that they had no desire to extend their responsibilities, but they could no longer tolerate the current unsatisfactory condition of the frontier; it could not be left undefended and vulnerable to raids, when Britain was obligated to protect disarmed villages. Increasing expenditure on the Border Military Police appeared to be the only solution.²⁶²

Deane, Chief Commissioner of the North West Frontier Province, although reprimanded for failing to control the current unrest, blamed Curzon's policy, with which he had

²⁵⁹ NLS MS 12735, Godley to Minto, 6 April 1906.

²⁶⁰ BL IOL, L/MIL/17/13/20, List of Raids and Outrages Committed on the North West Frontier and in Baluchistan from July 1899 to July 1906.

²⁶¹ NLS MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 13 & 29 March 1906; MS 12644, Foreign Department Summary, Afghanistan and North West Frontier, pp. 8-9.

²⁶² NLS MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 18 April 1906.

disagreed from the start. The former Viceroy, in his determination to have his policy accepted as right, had criticised individuals if anything went wrong rather than recognising the faults with his reforms. He had been unfair to officials and his successors, burdening them with too heavy a workload by combining the duties of civil administration and military protection. As a result of his failure to consult local experts, Curzon had been unable to appreciate the reality of the situation on the frontier. Deane was annoyed by Minto's criticism, arguing that 'if in these circumstances Lord Curzon has been pleased to describe the frontier as a haven of rest and peace, am I to blame?' Deane responded that

I have given facts which show how much nearer to trouble we have been in the course of this last year or two than a bald statement of frontier offences, without regard to the political situation, can give an idea of. It is necessary to understand that we must be prepared for trouble which may arise at any time through the position we hold.

The instability of the region made it impossible to permanently prevent trouble, which could erupt unexpectedly. The depth of religious fundamentalism meant that the policy successfully implemented in Baluchistan was inappropriate for the frontier. He believed that occupation of tribal territory was the only way to avoid repeated expeditions, but '[the real] difficulty on the Frontier is to avoid having to use force,' to enforce government policy. Unprovoked aggression, or even gestures such as railway construction that could be misinterpreted on Britain's part would only provoke retaliation and his aim throughout was settle disputes and reduce tension peacefully, a vital skill for frontier personnel. Therefore he urged Minto to understand the difficulties facing frontier officials, and utilise the detailed knowledge possessed by 'men on the spot' in achieving these aims.²⁶³ Minto was more inclined to listen to advice proffered by his subordinates and colleagues, and their views influenced many of his ideas about frontier policy. Beyond the necessity of maintaining order and preserving security the Viceroy had few concrete plans, recognising that success in the turbulent borderlands remained dependent on maintaining a flexible attitude that allowed India's authorities to respond to threats as they arose.

²⁶³ NLS MS 12764, Deane to Minto, 30 April 1906 Encl. Memo by Deane; MS 12765, Correspondence between the Viceroy and Persons in India, July to December 1906, Deane to Minto, 27 July 1906.

Kitchener did not share Deane's views, instead advocating the adoption of a more aggressive policy to establish greater control within tribal boundaries and counter the potential military threat posed by the tribes. It would be unnecessary to launch a full-scale campaign to achieve this end, as British authority could be extended gradually by retaining troops in the region following punitive expeditions, which would enable Simla to fulfil its obligations to defend its subjects and improve India's strategic position vis-à-vis Russia. The Amir's willingness to curb border lawlessness created a tribal respect for his authority that contrasted unfavourably with their contemptuous attitude towards British power. Kitchener argued that spineless oscillation between conciliation and punishment had to be replaced by a more settled policy.²⁶⁴ Morley's response illustrated the difficulties Minto and his colleagues would face in persuading his British superiors that tribal violence posed a threat to India's security. Despite his determination that there should be minimal continuity with the previous regime, Morley supported the claims Curzon made for his frontier policy and wished to avoid the increased expenditure it was feared a return to aggressive forward policies would entail. He doubted that repeating the 'old story – hammer the tribes and bully the Amir' would stop raids.²⁶⁵ Minto was bemused by Morley's apparent belief that Kitchener was advocating a plan 'to conquer the tribes immediately,' as Simla merely argued that allowing tribal territory to become a 'no man's land' posed a danger to India's subjects which could be neutralised if they deployed occupying forces following punitive expeditions. Throwing away what had been gained by military operations only to have to repeat the procedure was an expensive waste of resources that could be avoided by 'absorbing' territory to break the cycle of tribal violence and official retribution.²⁶⁶ Such debates illustrate the tension created by the conflicting priorities of centre and periphery. Minto was guilty of minimising the difficulties the large-scale military operations required to affect such a policy would entail, and was unable to alter Morley's views that conquering tribal territory was a mistake. While willing to let Simla respond to serious disorder, Morley would never allow the adoption of new fresh responsibilities and expenditure, as he believed that the frontier should not be the sole focus of India's attention; 'raids on one side, and hammerings on the other, are not the only things we have to think of.'²⁶⁷ But Morley was equally guilty of failing to appreciate the anxieties that the frontier aroused for Indian administrators.

²⁶⁴ NLS MS 12602, A Note on the Military Policy of India.

²⁶⁵ NLS MS 12736, Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, June to December 1906, Morley to Minto, 5 October 1906; Wolpert, *Morley and India*, pp. 88-90.

²⁶⁶ NLS MS 12736, Minto to Morley, 28 October 1906; MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 12 December 1907; MS 12738, Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, 1908, Minto to Morley, 29 January 1908; MS 12765, Minto to Kitchener, 28 October 1906.

²⁶⁷ NLS MS 12738, Morley to Minto, 8 January 1908.

By 1908, Minto argued that ‘the state of affairs on our frontier is becoming simply disreputable.’²⁶⁸ Confronting widespread lawlessness, India’s Government was reaping the harvest sown by Curzon’s policy. A long succession of raids had proved how ineffectual the system of frontier defence was. Reliance on irregular forces was no longer a viable option. Curzon’s reforms had achieved the laudable aim of interesting the tribes in the defence of their own territory, but had not achieved its primary objective of securing the frontier in the absence of regulars. Curzon had been well aware of these difficulties, and when a Foreign Department report of 1905 commented that,

An unparalleled state of terror existed on the frontier between November 1904 and March 1905, and that state of affairs had not been fully reported to the Government of India,

even the former Viceroy had been forced to admit that: ‘the present system is a scandal and strong measures are required to remedy it.’²⁶⁹ Although conversant with the turbulent state of the frontier on the eve of his departure, Curzon still refused to publicly criticise his policy and boasted in his farewell speech that he had handed over a peaceful frontier to his successor. Such blatant lies outraged Minto, as ‘Curzon left the frontier in a very unsettled condition and only great forbearance has prevented an explosion before now.’ Attempts by the British press to extol Curzon’s policy merely annoyed him further:

For everyone knows here that it has been anything but a success: it’s weaknesses during his time were minimised, whilst the forces it provided to cope with border lawlessness have lacked cohesion and have not always proved themselves reliable.

Government enquiries into frontier defence reported that failure to act against continued raids, especially against major towns like Peshawar, was taken by the tribes as evidence of

²⁶⁸ NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 12 December 1907.

²⁶⁹ NLS MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 19 February 1908; MS 12743, Telegraphic Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, 1908, Minto to Morley, 25 February 1908.

government weakness. For a regime whose power was based on prestige, such a situation was intolerable.²⁷⁰

Attempts to stabilise South Waziristan and control the Mahsuds, 'perhaps the most troublesome of all the tribesmen,'²⁷¹ illustrated the difficulties of implementing a consistent frontier policy and the need to adopt a pragmatic approach. Curzon believed that this district had demonstrated the success of his policy. The tribe had supposedly been pacified by the imposition of a blockade on their territory from December 1900 to 1902, which, when complemented by more active retaliation, forced the Mahsuds to come to terms after previous refusal to pay fines. Minto doubted the expediency of the enterprise, believing that Curzon had been guilty of dissembling and remarking that although a large military force had been employed 'to avoid appearance of a campaign operations were called a blockade.'²⁷² Efforts to establish a militia force in South Waziristan were cautiously adopted to demonstrate that the policy of replacing troops with irregular units could be successfully applied across the frontier without risk. Despite some initial success, the failure to eradicate the influence of radical mullahs like the 'pestilential' Powindah meant that the 'crash was not long in coming.'²⁷³ The force had been infiltrated, and in what the Government described as 'a fanatical outburst' the commandant and the Wana Political agent were murdered on the Mullah Powindah's orders as part of a plot to take control of the forts and spark a wider jihad. Farrell blames Curzon for ignoring the opinions of experienced frontier officials and soldiers in his desperation to get his experiment working. Enlistment of the local tribes had been pushed too fast, and it was unrealistic to expect the Mahsuds to develop loyalty to British officers after the recent blockade and years of friction. Expectations of their ability to respond to European concepts of discipline were unreasonably high.²⁷⁴

Official claims that 'the agitation [had] gradually subsided and when Lord Curzon left India there was no reason to apprehend any disturbance in Waziristan,' astonished frontier

²⁷⁰ NLS MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 29 January, 11 & 26 February 1908; MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 25 February 1908.

²⁷¹ NLS MS 12722, Lord Minto's Indian Press Cuttings, May 1909 to November 1910, *Times*, 24 May 1910, pp. 235-239.

²⁷² NLS MS 12591, pp. 40-44; MS 12600, pp. 163-170; MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 25 February 1908; BL IOL L/MIL/17/13/16/2 Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India Vol. 2 North West Frontier Tribes between the Kabul and Gumal Rivers, pp. 236-445.

²⁷³ NLS MS 12591, p. 45; MS 12600, pp. 56, 63-66; Farrell, 'Frontier Militias', p. 174.

²⁷⁴ Farrell, 'Frontier Militias', pp. 174-175; NLS, MS 12591, pp. 40-45.

officials and the new Vicerine,²⁷⁵ but is barely considered in the historiography. It hardly represented the facts. Curzon's policy had done nothing to destroy the influence of the 'pestilential' Mullah, the problem at the heart of Mahsud unrest. Almost immediately on his arrival Minto had to deal with the murder of another British officer. Captain Donaldson was shot dead by a North Waziristan Militia deserter who was closely connected to Mullah Powindah and had two relatives in prison for complicity in one of the other murders. The situation had become intolerable; three British officers had been murdered in Waziristan in fifteen months, throwing the entire militia policy into doubt.²⁷⁶ The father of one victim, who had been Canning's private secretary and was therefore familiar with the problems facing Viceroy, had no doubt where the blame ultimately lay:

[one] cannot help feeling that it was a dubious step by Lord Curzon to withdraw the regular troops from six out of the ten frontier stations, and to place confidence in levies from a race so notoriously untrustworthy as Pathans, whose bad name has become a proverb.²⁷⁷

Minto undoubtedly agreed and assured him that 'the safety of the British officers with the frontier levies is a constant anxiety to me.'²⁷⁸

While other tribes could be successfully subdued by military operations and would subsequently remain quiet, Mahsud lawlessness continuously undermined frontier stability. Constrained by the dictates of their British superiors about undertaking new responsibilities, Minto and the Indian authorities were forced into various expedients to contain this threat. In early 1906 believing that they were facing a concerted plot to conduct jihad against British rule rather than 'isolated cases of fanaticism,' Simla feared that unless strong measures, possibly including punitive military operations, were taken it would prove impossible to preserve effective frontier administration. Some disagreement existed within the Indian authorities. While Kitchener favoured strengthening the militia to 'advance the pressure of civilisation,' Minto argued that a system dependent on, at best, unreliable forces like the tribal militia, could not ensure the safety of British officers, a

²⁷⁵ NLS MS 12591, p.45; Lady Minto, *India, Minto and Morley*, p. 38.

²⁷⁶ NLS MS 12644, Summary of the Principal Events and Measures of the Viceroyalty of H.E. The Earl of Minto, Viceroy and Governor General of India from November 1905 to November 1910, Afghanistan and North West Frontier, Foreign Department, pp. 5-7.

²⁷⁷ NLS MS 12776, Bowring to Minto, 22 February 1906; NLS, MS 12591, p.45.

²⁷⁸ NLS MS 12776, Minto to Bowring, 31 March 1906.

primary consideration in his view. The Viceroy claimed that only reinforcing frontier posts with reliable regular troops could extend government influence, and that accepting tribal overtures in this direction was preferable to announcing that 'we will have nothing to do with you, but will lay waste to your country if you do not keep your people in order.' Nevertheless, Minto was concerned that to guarantee security on the frontier, an expedition would have to be undertaken immediately, an idea which Kitchener opposed. Frontier officials denied that any of these measures would improve security, and argued that redeploying regular troops would provoke attacks and negate the usefulness of the militia, removing a source of lucrative employment and forcing many to resort to raiding. To avoid the necessity for military operations, it was decided in February 1906 to enforce collective responsibility on the Mahsuds for the 'heinous crimes' of its members by imposing fines and withholding allowances until suspects were surrendered for trial and the tribe had provided evidence of its good conduct. The tribe was warned that if it failed to comply with the terms, an expedition would be launched followed by disarmament and occupation. Such leniency must have surprised the Mahsuds, who were apparently preparing for immediate retribution.²⁷⁹

Morley had been deeply disturbed by events on the frontier, especially the indications that organised incitement to murder had replaced the usually random violence. Accepting the above proposals despite concerns that halting tribal allowances would provoke further violence, Morley ordered India to be prepared for all possible contingencies, and even agreed to approve absolutely necessary measures to ensure the safety of British officers and enforce the demands, 'even if they involve the return of regular forces.' Simla was warned, however, not to anticipate approval for any 'serious departure from established policy,' especially permanent occupation, although as Morley wrongly believed that Minto and Kitchener opposed punitive expeditions, he did not expect it to be suggested.²⁸⁰

Although they still regarded the Waziristan situation as unsatisfactory, a hope pervaded Indian Government opinion that more magnanimous treatment, as opposed to mere retributive violence, would appeal to the Mahsuds and have an eventual quieting effect on

²⁷⁹ NLS MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 20 & 28 December 1905, 10 & 17 January 1906, 1 February 1906, Minto to Godley, 2 & 17 January 1906; MS 12741, Telegraphic Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, November 1905 to December 1906, Minto to Morley, 18 & 28 January 1906, 2 & 12 February 1906; MS 12644, pp. 5-7.

²⁸⁰ NLS MS 12375, Morley to Minto, 11 January, 1 & 9 February 1906; MS 12741, Morley to Minto, 23 & 30 January, 3 February 1906.

the tribe.²⁸¹ The authorities had provided some financial assistance to prevent any recourse to raiding by the Mahsuds, and initially the tribe appeared willing to fulfil the conditions for restoration of their allowances, as even Mullah Powindah cooperated in efforts to capture the suspects and enforce good behaviour. The policy soon collapsed as the Mahsuds, fearing that the Mullah was using his influence to incite further violence, refused to accept responsibility for their fellow tribesmen's conduct. The subsequent outbreak of an internal power struggle did little to curtail their aggression. Confirmation of Powindah's complicity in the murder of the British officers and that he was continuing his 'campaign of fanaticism' closed another possible avenue for settlement, as it completed his alienation from the authorities who had once viewed him as a useful intermediary in their previous efforts.²⁸²

Minto became increasingly frustrated that the constraints Morley had imposed were preventing the Indian authorities from taking appropriate action to halt the growing tide of Mahsud lawlessness during 1907. The responses sanctioned by London, of imposing collective tribal responsibility or withholding allowances, had done little to prevent raiding. Now, Minto argued, the situation was intolerable, and 'for the sake of the safety of the Frontier, I do not see how we can avoid an expedition, and having embarked on it, we must do our best to remain in the country.' Inaction in response to contemptuous tribal defiance of Government warnings had merely damaged British prestige and increased the danger that if forced to launch an expedition, it would be against a large-scale uprising provoked by their apparent weakness.²⁸³ Disagreement between Minto and Kitchener about the best methods of controlling tribal territory, focusing on whether holding strategic positions and constructing roads would be more effective than administering Waziristan, undermined their case, and proved their doubts about whether the 'Secretary of State will allow an expedition on the case we can at present put before him,' absolutely right.²⁸⁴ Simla was unable to persuade Morley that while retreat following military operations would only leave an unfortunate legacy of hatred, occupying territory would improve security in tribal areas without further expense or bloodshed. The Secretary of State was

²⁸¹ NLS MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 15 February, 1 & 8 March 1906.

²⁸² NLS MS 12644, pp. 5-9. See also MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 9 & 18 April 1906; MS 12741 Minto to Morley, 7 & 11 March 1906; MS 12765, Deane to Minto, 6 & 27 July, 27 August 1906, Kitchener to Minto, 11 August 1906; MS 12736, Minto to Morley, 22 August & 28 October 1906

²⁸³ NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 15 July, 29 August, & 12 September 1907; MS 12742, Minto to Morley, 20 July, 27 August, 10 & 17 September 1907; MS 12767, Correspondence between the Viceroy and Persons in India, July to December 1907, Minto to Kitchener, 13 September 1907; MS 12644, pp. 9-13.

²⁸⁴ NLS MS 12767, Kitchener to Minto, 15 October 1907, Minto to Kitchener, 17 October 1907.

unconvinced that this was possible without precipitating an uprising, and remained concerned that India's hawks were intent on launching a major campaign to avenge the humiliation of the Tirah uprising.²⁸⁵ The Viceroy's Council doubted that the measures introduced would achieve much, but, denied recourse to military action, they could devise no alternative way out of the difficulties they encountered and could only hope to exploit the tension between the Mullah and the tribal elders. Witnessing the consequences of such procrastination convinced Minto and his advisers that a forward policy was 'the eventual solution of a lot of difficulties on the Frontier,' providing the best guarantee of peace and the only way to prevent inevitable raiding, or lessen their frustration that their British superiors were refusing to adopt the most economical policy.²⁸⁶

The successful measures taken by the local Political Agent following the Mahsuds' murder of his servants in March 1908 illustrated that swift punitive action could curtail tribal lawlessness. Widespread arrests, property seizures, and the imposition of a blockade, supported by the moveable column from Tank, were used as a bargaining tool at the tribal jirga to settle outstanding disputes. While warned to avoid 'any military display likely to encourage idea that military expedition is intended,' the Government supported his actions. Minto praised his prompt response for saving them from the necessity of launching an expedition and even Morley supported attempts to reach a settlement with the tribe that avoided provocative action. This consensus proved fragile as disagreement between Simla and London about the terms to be imposed on the jirga soon destroyed the opportunity to permanently pacify the Mahsuds. Morley refused to approve complete forfeiture of tribal allowances, fearing this would deny the Mahsuds the opportunity to re-establish friendly relations with the Government, thus cementing their anti-British hostility and leading to a wider escalation of the tribal unrest. Temporarily halting payments was considered to be sufficiently severe punishment, as it provided the opportunity for restoration once minor cases were settled and the tribe had proved its good behaviour. Simla, however, remained concerned about the Mahsuds' ability to restrain its 'bad characters,' and despaired that an impasse had been reached. Minto believed that as the limit of what could be achieved with low-intensity reprisals or negotiations had been reached, stronger action was required to prevent the spread of more serious lawlessness,

²⁸⁵ NLS MS 12737, Morley to Minto, 26 September 1907, Minto to Morley, 16 October 1907; MS 12742, Telegraphic Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, 1907, Morley to Minto, 9 October & 3 December 1907; MS 12743, Morley to Minto, 14 January 1908; MS 12764, Deane to Minto, 29 May 1906; MS 12767, Minto to Kitchener, 14 & 17 October 1907.

²⁸⁶ NLS MS 12742, Minto to Morley, 22 October 1907; MS 12767, Deane to Minto, 18 November 1907, Minto to Deane, 7 December 1907.

but London refused to sanction any measures entailing extended responsibility, which prevented India from consolidating any advantages it had gained.²⁸⁷

Continued Mahsud violence, including attacks on military police posts that left 11 officers dead, and the Mullah's ongoing efforts to incite ghaza by threatening to resist any British encroachment and launch further raids unless restrictions against the tribe were lifted, proved for many in India the bankruptcy of the approach that limitations imposed from London had forced them to adopt. Economic sanctions appeared to have some success, as the Mahsuds proved willing, on being told that mere promises did not warrant restoration of allowances or re-enlistment in the militia, to make efforts to atone for previous offences and re-establish friendly relations with the authorities by paying fines and surrendering rifles to settle outstanding cases. In March 1909 the jirga was praised for its excellent behaviour, and Minto, delighted by the results that could be achieved by a more magnanimous policy of humanisation rather than mere military action, believed that more could be achieved by extending the enlistment of Mahsuds:

In a military sense, our hands are tied by the policy of His Majesty's Government in dealing with the Mahsuds, and we are, under present conditions, condemned to suffer a succession of raids and a loss of valuable lives. Though we are forbidden to take efficient military action, we are, I think, called upon to do something and the scheme in question appears to hold out reasonable hopes of success and to be well worth trying.

The new found harmony did not last, and the Mahsuds' attempts to murder the Commandant of the North Waziristan militia and their attacks on irregular frontier forces, contributed much to the generally unsettled atmosphere in the region.²⁸⁸ Morley warned India to avoid any measures that could tend towards punitive military action, but at the same time criticised them for failing to curb the Mullah's influence or prevent raids.²⁸⁹ Such criticism infuriated Minto, who argued that as a result of the Secretary of State's

²⁸⁷ NLS MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 15 April & 23 June 1908; MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 14 January, 15, 18, 20 & 28 March, 3 & 6 April, 13 May 1908, Morley to Minto, 28 March 1908. See also the correspondence between the Viceroy, the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, and the Government of India Foreign Department from March to May 1908 in MS 12651 Mahsud & Mohmand, for example, Chief Commissioner to Foreign Secretary, 17 March 1908, or Foreign Secretary to Chief Commissioner, 18 March 1908.

²⁸⁸ NLS MS 12634, pp. 51-56; MS 12644, pp. 4-11, 12-24; MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 23 June 1908; MS 12744, Telegraphic Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, 1909, Minto to Morley, 19 January 1909.

²⁸⁹ NLS MS 12744, Morley to Minto, 15 May & 16 June 1909.

refusal to sanction the only measures capable of finally solving the problem, they now faced the situation where the Mahsuds had become a source of constant irritation: 'Personally I think we may well be satisfied as to our treatment of raids under political conditions, which without embarking on new policy, we cannot disregard.' Measures adopted so far had achieved some success: frontier forces were cognisant of the Mullah's movements, several lashkars had been dispersed without committing any offences, and raiding now carried serious risks for the Mahsuds. But the Viceroy recognised that the employment of regulars in the large numbers required to completely eliminate crime would only provoke unrest and necessitate large-scale military operations. In a final dig at Morley, Minto argued that the situation was as favourable as could be expected under the existing policy.²⁹⁰

Minto had learned from his Canadian experience that as a predecessor's legacy could set the parameters for an incoming governor's tenure, it was important to maintain a pragmatic attitude that would enable him to respond flexibly to any difficulties that may arise. Curzon's frontier policy, particularly the erroneous belief that it had brought unprecedented tranquillity to the troubled borderlands without the need for expensive military operations, imposed very tight restrictions on Minto. Experienced officials knew that no single policy could be successfully applied across such a complex region, and that Curzon's plans were especially unsuited to troublesome areas like Waziristan, but it was difficult to convince superiors in London who saw only reduced expenditure. Temperamentally indisposed to support any military action, Morley was reluctant to depart from Curzon's scheme, but paradoxically Curzon's actions in other spheres, notably foreign policy, had made the Liberals equally reluctant to grant the new Viceroy the freedom of action necessary to implement policy successfully and allow the 'man on the spot' appropriate influence in policy formation. Perhaps the Liberals feared that Minto's Unionist background inclined him towards actions that they could not support; although this was never explicitly stated, Morley made vague hints when refusing to sanction military responses to tribal lawlessness. Simla had pacified the Mahsuds as far as was possible within the restrictions imposed by London, but as late as August 1910 troops had to be sent into their territory in response to renewed raiding, and fears remained that the Mullah would enlist wider tribal and Afghan support if larger military operations had been launched. As Minto departed, he could look with satisfaction at the vast improvements

²⁹⁰ NLS MS 12744, Minto to Morley, 21 June 1909.

made in Waziristan when compared with the menacing situation he had confronted on arrival, but he must have lamented that the limitations imposed by his office and the policy of his superiors in Britain prevented him from implementing the policies that could have successfully established order in the turbulent districts.²⁹¹

²⁹¹ NLS MS 12634, pp. 51-56; D.S. Richards, *The Savage Frontier* (Pan Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 151-158.

3. Containing Unreality: Minto and his Superiors

Already hindered by the troublesome legacies bestowed by his immediate predecessors, Minto's relationships with his superiors proved an equally insurmountable obstacle to attempts to impose his own stamp on the prestigious offices to which he had been appointed. Although vociferously resented by more zealous governors who wished to run imperial territories like personal possessions, proconsuls had to accept their ultimate subordination to ministerial masters at Whitehall, and through them to Parliament. Sensitive foreign and defence policy issues could be further complicated by tensions between the views of 'men on the spot' and their need to respond rapidly to events, and the pressures faced by superiors in London from other departments jealous of their own spheres of influence and more aware of the wider impact imperial problems could have on Britain's position.

Forceful personalities could always dominate the proconsul-minister relationship, and in this respect Minto was unfortunate, working with three of the most dominant political figures of the era. In Canada, he faced the difficult proposition of serving two masters, for in many respects the Governor General was an intermediary between separate institutions that rarely saw eye-to-eye on many important issues. His immediate superior for most of his Canadian career was Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies until October 1903, when he resigned to launch his tariff reform crusade and was replaced by the ineffectual Alfred Lyttelton. Although suspicious of Chamberlain and contemptuous of his connections with Rhodes, Minto enjoyed working with him, supporting his ultimate goal of consolidating the Empire by strengthening ties between Britain and the self-governing colonies. This similarity of outlook produced fewer complaints from Minto about his working relationship with Chamberlain than would be voiced about his partnership with Morley, but the former was not as claustrophobic as the Viceroy/Indian Secretary combination; both had the safety valve of working with a wider range of people that provided greater opportunities for venting the frustrations that inevitably built up from working in close proximity. Over the course of his time in Canada Minto came to doubt the efficacy of the methods Chamberlain had adopted to achieve his objectives. Recognising the strength of emerging Canadian nationalism, he increasingly felt it would be best to rely on sentimental links rather than formalised arrangements.

Chamberlain's decision to accept the Colonial Office in 1895 when more prestigious offices were open to such a high profile politician surprised many. But this was part of his plan. He appeared to have only one aim and pursued it vigorously: 'with fanatical single-mindedness [he] tried to bind the Empire into a military, economic and political federation,'²⁹² As Kendle argued, for the first time a statesman of the highest rank had chosen the Colonial Office in the hope of furthering closer imperial union.²⁹³ Consolidating the Empire would allow more effective use of its resources, enabling Britain to strengthen its position in the face of increasing international competition. Making the Colonial Secretary a central part of the administration and turning the Colonial Office into a central department of state²⁹⁴ would highlight the Empire's role as the foundation of Britain's great power status. The presence of such a leading figure at what was previously a backwater would show the self-governing colonies that their interests were being afforded a high priority and also excited those imperial unionists who considered Chamberlain to be the only man capable of providing the leadership necessary to effect imperial reconsolidation.²⁹⁵ A Colonial Secretary who seriously considered their claims and listened to their problems, rather than treating them with the contempt to which they had become accustomed, proved popular with colonial politicians who believed he had the power to do something about them.²⁹⁶

The appearance of great achievements by the newly high-profile Colonial Office proved deceptive, and several factors combined to prevent Chamberlain realising many of his goals. As a result many historians have been critical of his efforts, with some even dismissing his ministerial record as second rate. His vision and ambition frequently outran his ability, and attempts to challenge the control exercised by Salisbury and his fellow grandees, particularly in foreign policy, were hindered by his inept performance. When combined with an unenviable ability to land his government in trouble, such as the association with the Jameson Raid which had done incalculable damage to his reputation at an early stage of his ministerial career, this interference did little to improve his standing with those elements of the Conservative party that despised his vulgar materialism.

²⁹² R. Cook et al, *Canada: A Modern Study* (Clarke, Irwin, Toronto, 1963), p. 171; see also P.P. O'Brien, 'The Titan Refreshed: Imperial Overstretch and the British Navy Before the First World War' *P&P* 172 (2001), p. 146.

²⁹³ J.E. Kendle *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887-1911: A Study in Imperial Organisation* (Longman, London, 1967), p. 19.

²⁹⁴ R.C. Brown and R. Cook *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (McLelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1974), p. 30; R. Jay *Joseph Chamberlain: A Political Study* (OUP, Oxford, 1981), pp. 197ff.

²⁹⁵ Kendle *Colonial and Imperial Conferences*, p. 19.

²⁹⁶ Jay, *Political Study*, pp. 197ff.

Despite claims that he brought a new businesslike approach to imperial administration, doubts have been cast on his efficiency; as Judd argues, bustle and noise could not conceal barren results. Devoid of the resources necessary to assume more imperial burdens, the Colonial Office could not overcome Treasury opposition to Chamberlain's innovations, and was unable to obtain the power and status within the policy-making apparatus required to implement his schemes. His prescribed solutions for tightening imperial links took little account of the increased autonomy among the self-governing colonies, and he grossly underestimated the strength of colonial nationalism, always believing it was an obstacle that could be overcome.²⁹⁷

Having a fervent imperialist as his superior in London complicated Minto's relationship with the Canadian government. His main partner in Ottawa, Wilfrid Laurier, is highly regarded by Canadian historians, although Minto took a more critical view. Laurier's hopes for Canada were not dissimilar to Chamberlain's wider plans for the Empire, aiming primarily to use his talent for compromise to consolidate the shaky edifice of Confederation after the damage caused by the crises of the 1890s, and 'bring our people long estranged from each other gradually to become a nation.'²⁹⁸ Hoping to build a stronger, more united Canada by healing the conflicts that had divided and weakened the country, Laurier showed little enthusiasm for Chamberlain's potentially divisive imperial projects, despite the difficulties this caused in English Canada and Minto's tireless efforts to persuade him.

²⁹⁷ E.H.H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism* (Routledge, London, 1995), pp. 72ff; Jay, *Political Study*, pp. 211ff; D. Judd, *Radical Joe* (Hamilton, London, 1977), p. 185, 201-2; Kubicek, *Administration of Imperialism*, pp. ix-x, 4-5, 14ff; P.T. Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1994), pp. 406-7, 417; Porter, *Lion's Share*, pp. 130-41; R. Quinalt, 'Joseph Chamberlain: A Reassessment' in T.R. Gourvish & A. O'Day (eds.), *Later Victorian Britain, 1867-1900* (Macmillan, London, 1988), pp. 89-91; R. Sarty, 'Canada and the Great Rapprochement, 1902-1914' in B.J.C. McKercher and L. Aronsen (eds.), *The North Atlantic Triangle in a Changing World: Anglo-American-Canadian Relations, 1902-1956* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1996), p. 17; G Searle, *A New England? Peace and War 1886-1918* (OUP, Oxford, 2004), pp. 263-65, 294, 391; S.H. Zebel 'Joseph Chamberlain and the Genesis of Tariff Reform' *JBS* 7 (1967), pp. 133ff.

²⁹⁸ J.T. Saywell 'The 1890s' in Careless & Brown (eds.), *The Canadians 1867-1967* pp. 131ff. For further information on Laurier see P. Berton, *Marching as to War: Canada's Turbulent Years 1899-1953* (Doubleday, Toronto, 2001), pp. 20ff; G. Bowering, *Egotists and Autocrats: The Prime Ministers of Canada* (Viking, Toronto, 1999), pp. 132ff; Brown (ed.), *The Illustrated History of Canada*, pp. 372-373, 402ff; Brown & Cook, *Nation Transformed*, pp. 7ff; Buchan, *Lord Minto*, p. 121; Cook et al, *Canada*, pp. 153, 169ff; McNaught, *Penguin History of Canada*, pp. 188, 207-212; J. Monet, 'Canada' in J. Eddy & D. Schreuder (eds.), *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988), pp. 160-161; B. Robertson, *Sir Wilfrid Laurier: The Great Conciliator* (Quarry Press, Kingston, 1991), passim; O.D. Skelton, *The Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier Vol. II* (The Century Co., New York, 1922) passim; Stevens & Saywell (eds.), *LMCP I*, passim; Wade, *French Canadians*, passim; J. Willison, *Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal Party: A Political History* (John Murray, London, 1903), passim.

Minto thoroughly enjoyed working with Laurier and a strong friendship developed between them. However, Minto took Laurier's willingness to compromise as weakness and refusal to lead. Often this was just a case of not doing what Britain desired, and resisting Minto and Chamberlain's forceful pressure required strength. Minto correctly analysed Laurier's attitude towards the Empire, as Berton states 'he believed there was no advantage to Canadians in close connection with Britain...He was indeed a Canadian nationalist.'²⁹⁹ Minto's correspondence is littered with references to the problems he encountered trying to persuade Canada to adopt the policies thrust forward by Chamberlain:

Sir Wilfrid is a delightful personality, broad-minded, and I always find him charming to deal with – but he is not a strong man – is I think anxious to take life easily, and generally inclined to agree all round – this does not always simplify the position....It is impossible to help feeling that there is an anti-imperial connection feeling in high quarters in Canada – Mulock and Borden were both I believe in all the early discussions as to sending contingents thoroughly British. I cannot disguise from myself that at heart Sir Wilfrid is not. He may be so as a matter of political opportunity – but he is not genuinely so...³⁰⁰

He realised sooner than his British superiors that Canada aimed at greater autonomy within, rather than tightened links with, the Empire, rapidly appreciating that Laurier was at best indifferent, and at worst hostile to any perceived threat to Canadian unity, although his desire to maintain the compromise nature of Canadian government often manifested itself as an apparent lack of enthusiasm about anything. Such reluctance was ascribed to Laurier's ancestry; to many British politicians his French background precluded him from absorbing British sympathies, although Minto acerbically noted that Laurier was perfectly willing to support Chamberlain's proposals when there were obvious advantages to the Dominion and his own government. Minto frequently complained that Laurier was too easily influenced, especially by French Canadian firebrands opposed to the Empire, and he correctly identified that Laurier's ultimate aim was independence, all the while bemoaning that the Prime Minister did not do enough to educate or lead the country on imperial issues. This clash of interest and ideas often created tension in what was a mostly harmonious relationship.

²⁹⁹ Berton, *Marching as to War*, p. 21.

³⁰⁰ *LMCP II*, Minto to Chamberlain, 2 September 1901, pp. 66-69.

Minto, Canada and the Empire

Despite the divisive nature of its ideology and the almost total failure to achieve its objectives, under Chamberlain's dynamic leadership, 'imperialism' had become a central factor in British politics. Apparently offering viable solutions to the myriad problems Britain encountered in the late nineteenth century, many elements of the programme, from tariff reform to the creation of a unified imperial defence system, attracted widespread popular support.³⁰¹ In Canada, Minto experienced the tension created by the conflict of these proposals with local desires for increased autonomy. Imperialist sentiment had emerged as a potent force in Canadian politics during the bitter domestic upheavals of the 1890s, and thus Laurier had to accommodate such ideas to avoid any exacerbation of existing ill-feeling. Some historians regard it as a primitive expression of nationalist sentiment; association with the Empire became a defining aspect of British-Canadian identity, representing separateness both from their Francophone compatriots and America. For many it was a stepping-stone on the path to nationhood that offered autonomy as well as protection without expense from the potential threat posed by the US. Canadian imperialists aspired to the development of a greater role within the Empire, but the Dominion proved reluctant to assume the responsibilities commensurate with its imagined status, happy to utilise the benefits bestowed by British prestige and quick to complain if its interests were ignored or its autonomy threatened.³⁰² Any subordination to the 'wider aims' of British policy was resented. The parochial outlook of the self-governing colonies infuriated British officials, who grew to resent preposterous colonial aspirations that were believed to pose a threat to imperial interests.

Laurier remained ambivalent to imperialism, willing to accommodate it if necessary to protect Confederation or his own political position, but otherwise wishing to focus his attention on Canada. His public 'rhetorical excesses'³⁰³ in 1897 had further heightened

³⁰¹ Judd, *Radical Joe*, p. 189; Hyam, *Imperial Century*, pp. 249-56; Marsh, *Entrepreneur in Politics*, pp. 417ff; Porter, *Lion's Share*, pp. 130-141.

³⁰² For discussion of Canadian imperialism, see Berger, *Sense of Power*; R.J.D. Page (ed.), *Imperialism and Canada, 1895-1903* (Holt, Rinehart & Wilson, Toronto, 1972), 'Canada and the Imperial Idea in the Boer War Years' *JCS* 5 (1970), pp. 33-48 & *The Boer War and Canadian Imperialism* (Canadian Historical Association, Ottawa, 1987); T. Cook, 'George R Parkin and the Concept of Britannic idealism' *JCS* 10 (1975), pp. 15-31; D. Cole, 'The Problem of "Nationalism" and "Imperialism" in British Settlement Colonies' *JBS* 10 (1971), pp. 160-182; I.T. Naamani, 'The "Anglo-Saxon" Idea and British Public Opinion' *CHR* 32 (1951), pp. 163-187; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*; C. Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War* (Canadian War Museum Press, Ottawa, 1998); Davis & Huttenback, *Pursuit of Empire*, pp. 145ff.

³⁰³ Wade, *French Canadians*, p. 474.

Chamberlain's hopes of making progress towards federation, but Laurier dashed these in private by rejecting proposals to assume greater responsibilities for imperial defence, especially those involving higher expenditure. Laurier returned to Ottawa in triumph, having assuaged the doubts of those who questioned his imperial loyalty while avoiding embroiling Canada in expensive commitments to the Empire that many had been anxious to avoid.³⁰⁴ Working with a more avowedly imperialist Governor during a series of crises for the Empire tested Laurier's new-found enthusiasm and publicly expressed willingness for Canada to respond when 'the fires were lit on the hills.' Minto described the crisis over the participation of Canadian troops in South Africa as the defining event of his gubernatorial career.³⁰⁵ Providing a test case for Chamberlain's aims to promote imperial solidarity and encourage more active colonial contribution to colonial defence, throughout the increasingly bitter debate Minto believed it his duty to protect and further imperial interests, regardless of the strain this placed on his working relationship with the Canadian government.³⁰⁶

Discussion between Minto and Seymour about possible Canadian assistance in the event of war with France in late 1898 raised larger questions about imperial defence cooperation.³⁰⁷ Recalling the difficulties that had arisen over this issue during his service as Military Secretary, Minto doubted that Canada had overcome its previous reluctance to sacrifice men or money needed for its own development, an attitude ingrained in the Militia Act. As it considered only direct attacks on the Dominion, raising forces to serve elsewhere against a European country would be a 'new departure,' not covered by provisions for deploying the militia outside Canada in certain circumstances. Although Minto felt troops could be easily raised in an emergency, he steadfastly believed it was unwise to prepare contingency plans dependent on the availability of Canadian troops for a wider conflict.³⁰⁸ For Minto it was important for imperial purposes to distinguish between Britain's right to officially call out the militia for service in the Empire, and an enthusiastically made 'sentimental offer,'

³⁰⁴ See, for example, Brown & Cook, *Nation Transformed*, pp. 32-34; Kendle, *Colonial and Imperial Conferences*, pp. 28ff; Marsh, *Entrepreneur in Politics*, pp. 433-66.

³⁰⁵ *LMCP II*, Minto to Parkin, 26 September 1904, pp. 538-46; Underhill 'Lord Minto on his Governor-Generalship', pp. 121-131

³⁰⁶ Of the nearly fifty works on Canadian and imperial history dealing with the events of autumn 1899, Miller, *Map Red*, provides the fullest discussion.

³⁰⁷ *LMCP I*, Seymour to Minto, 9 November 1898, pp. 11-12.

³⁰⁸ *LMCP I*, Minto to Seymour, 22 November 1898, pp. 16-18, Hutton to Minto, 19 March 1899, p. 40, Seymour to Minto, 20 March 1899, p. 42; NLS MS 12556, Minto to Palliser, 30 December 1898; Wade, *French Canadians*, pp. 476-77.

demonstrating Canadian support for Chamberlain's policies.³⁰⁹ Minto's delight at Laurier's imperialist interpretation of the act, admitting Britain's right to utilise the force for overseas service, was qualified by the knowledge that Ottawa rested safe in the fact that no militia regiment was fit for overseas service and a belief that Britain could not rely on the universal application of Laurier's literal translation; much would depend on the political considerations surrounding any decision.³¹⁰

Consideration of the Section 79 issue simultaneous to the deterioration of relations with Transvaal raised Canadian suspicions about Britain's plans to force them into closer defence cooperation. Hutton's boasts that he and Minto had forced

The weak-kneed and vacillating Laurier Government with their ill-disguised French and Pro-Boer proclivities to take a part – nay a leading part – in the great movement which has drawn the strings of our Anglo-Saxon British Empire so close,³¹¹

did little to allay such fears. Later historians dismissed claims of an imperial conspiracy to denude Canada of its autonomy, arguing that Laurier's government was driven to act by the strength of Canadian public opinion in favour of participation.³¹² Minto, however, had a significant role in Canada's involvement in South Africa.

Chamberlain initially hoped that military contributions from the self-governing colonies to operations in South Africa would demonstrate imperial solidarity;

If a really spontaneous request were made from any Canadian force to serve with HM's troops on such an expedition, it would be welcomed by the authorities and all necessary arrangements would have to be made to accept and carry it out.

³⁰⁹ *LMCP I*, Minto to Laurier, 25 March 1899, Memo of Conversation, 27 March 1899, Minto to Seymour, 1 April 1899, pp. 42-49.

³¹⁰ *LMCP I*, Minto to Seymour, 1 April 1899, pp. 48-49; Miller, *Map Red*, pp. 32-35; D. Morton, 'Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Use of Canadian Troops for Overseas Service' *Queens Quarterly* 77 (1970), pp. 81-86; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 183-197; Preston, *Imperial Defense*, pp. 272-74; Neuendorff, *Evolution of Dominion Status*, pp. 105-6; Skelton, *Life & Letters II*, pp. 91-93.

³¹¹ NLS MS 12576, Hutton to Minto, 10 January 1902.

³¹² Gundy 'Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Lord Minto', pp. 28-33; Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 81ff; Miller, *Map Red*, pp. xii, 32ff; Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, pp. 151ff.

Such a proof of the unity of the British Empire would have a great moral effect and might go far to secure a pacific settlement.³¹³

Minto fully supported Chamberlain's idea, and pre-empting Laurier's predicted refusal in a constitutionally improper move, instructed Hutton to secretly prepare a plan for a small Canadian force that could be organised and despatched with minimum disruption or expense.³¹⁴ Simultaneously efforts were made to persuade Laurier to accept the proposal and make a spontaneous offer, rather than merely bending to British pressure, to prove the Empire's strength and willingness to stand together to protect its interests.³¹⁵ Aware that any decision had to be made by Canada and that they could not be coerced to act, Minto urged Chamberlain to be cautious: 'I would carefully avoid the appearance of bringing pressure to bear.'³¹⁶

Minto became increasingly frustrated in his efforts to persuade Laurier to support participation, complaining bitterly that his lack of British enthusiasm and susceptibility to French Canadian pressure would prevent any offer of military assistance.³¹⁷ Attempts to alleviate fears that Canada would be forced to assume burdensome military expenditure or dismiss ideas that Britain was demanding military contributions by playing on Laurier's nationalism ('if Canada makes a spontaneous request she will act as a nation'³¹⁸) came to little. It proved difficult to shift Laurier from the traditional standpoint that Canada's development was more important than military adventures or ease his fears about the potential impact of participation on Confederation, although his arguments that Britain should not expect Canada to take part demonstrated a misunderstanding of Chamberlain's objectives.³¹⁹ Caught between Francophone opposition and Anglophone pressure, Laurier sought to find a compromise solution through the passage of a parliamentary resolution supporting British policy in South Africa or by accepting individual offers. Minto strenuously opposed the latter, believing it would defeat the whole purpose of raising a Canadian force. He doubted the prospect of any troops being sent, but increasingly sympathised with Laurier's predicament and hoped that 'there may be a decent way out of

³¹³ *LMCP I*, Chamberlain to Minto, 3 & 7 July 1899, pp. 92-95; Miller, *Canadian Career*, p. 86; Miller, *Map Red*, pp. 32-35; Morton, *Canada and War*, pp. 38ff.

³¹⁴ *LMCP I*, Hutton to Minto, 17 & 18 July 1899, Minto to Lady Minto, 18 July 1899, pp. 100-102; Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, p. 151; Stevens & Saywell, *Canadian Papers*, pp. xxxvi-vii.

³¹⁵ *LMCP I*, Minto to Laurier, 19 July 1899, pp. 102-3.

³¹⁶ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 20 July 1899, p. 103.

³¹⁷ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 25 July 1899, pp. 106-8.

³¹⁸ *LMCP I*, Minto to Laurier, 31 July 1899, Minto to Chamberlain, 2 August 1899, pp. 110-12.

³¹⁹ *LMCP I*, Laurier to Minto, 30 July 1899, p. 110; Morton, *Canada and War*, pp. 38-39.

it,' when they faced an irresponsible press campaign urging them to commit Canada to the expenditure of lives and money for a quarrel not threatening imperial safety.³²⁰

Minto's continued urgings to consider the issue from an imperial perspective could be resisted as unwarranted interference with local autonomy. Laurier could not withstand the popular enthusiasm that had been heightened in early October by Chamberlain's attempt to pressure them into action by releasing a telegram thanking Canada for its 'signal exhibition of patriotic spirit....shown by offers to serve in South Africa'³²¹ and the simultaneous publication of Hutton's plans, both of which provided imperial endorsement for those favouring participation. Laurier's policy of relying on private offers had been stripped of its credibility by Britain's direct request for aid, but the 'air of sinister design' surrounding the episode, momentarily strengthened his obstinacy.³²² Refusing to believe that not only the public but elements of his own Cabinet supported a policy he resented, Laurier blamed Minto and Hutton for offering troops behind his back, referring bitterly to 'the clandestine attempts...made to force our hands.'³²³ As Miller argues 'the first casualty of the crisis was the government's relations with the Governor General. Until this point Minto's relations with his government had been cordial.'³²⁴ Minto indignantly defended himself and Hutton against charges of coercing Canada, arguing that they were opposed to 'irresponsible offers' and that the Government should organise an official force.³²⁵

Facing a 'fundamental and grim' ethnic division within his Cabinet over whether to send troops³²⁶ and an increasingly bitter press battle, Laurier's primary aim was to preserve fragile Canadian unity, but he could no longer resist public opinion. As Minto stated at the departure of the first contingent on 31 October, 'it goes out because you insisted on its going and I am very glad you did so.'³²⁷ Although severely criticised in some quarters for

³²⁰ *LMCP I*, Minto to A. Elliot, 28 September 1899, pp. 130-32. Robertson, in *Great Conciliator*, p. 90, uses this as the basis for her description of Minto as a 'rational imperialist.'

³²¹ *LMCP I*, Chamberlain to the Administrator, 3 October 1899, pp. 132-33.

³²² Miller, *Map Red*, p. 41; Neuendorff, *Evolution of Dominion Status*, p. 106; Page, *Boer War and Canadian Imperialism*, p. 11; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 252-54; Preston, *Imperial Defense*, p. 262.

³²³ *LMCP I*, Laurier to Minto, 12 October 1899, p. 146; TNA CO 42/869, Correspondence between Secretary of State and Dominion of Canada, July to December 1899, Minto to Chamberlain, 13 October 1899; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, p. 255.

³²⁴ Miller, *Map Red*, p. 45.

³²⁵ *LMCP I*, Minto to Scott, 10 & 11 October 1899, pp. 141-45; J.S. Willison, *Reminiscences Political and Personal* (McLelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1919), p. 303.

³²⁶ C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict* (Macmillan, Toronto, 1977), p. 61; *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 14 October 1899, pp. 150-54.

³²⁷ NLS MS 12577, Lord Minto's Canadian Military and Naval Papers, 'Secret History', p. 68.

this remark, others, such as the *Montreal Star*, the leader of the pro-participation campaign, praised him: 'if Canada is unfortunate at this juncture in having a Government which is a little short on imperial spirit, it is fortunate in having a brave, gallant and loyal soldier for Governor General.'³²⁸ Minto was reluctant to claim sole credit for the despatch of troops, but his final attempts to persuade Laurier proved successful in finally tipping the ever-reluctant premier towards participation. Minto stressed that Canada's lack of cordiality when asked for assistance, at a time they were reliant on imperial support over Alaska, was creating an unfortunate impression. When combined with hints about the praise being lavished on the Australasian colonies for their contributions and that Canadian assistance would be welcomed as a demonstration of imperial unanimity, it provided the final push Laurier needed to make a decision.³²⁹ Exercising his influence subtly, by explaining to Laurier that a spontaneous offer would be appreciated while hinting at the potentially severe consequences for Canada's interests if they remained uncooperative, Minto proved that the Governor's opinions could have a significant influence on colonial policy.

The decision to send 1000 Canadian infantry was 'an uneasy compromise between all the pressures playing upon' Laurier,³³⁰ as vividly suggested by the official announcement of 14 October:

The Prime Minister, in view of the well known desire of a great many Canadians who are ready to take service under such conditions, is of the opinion that the moderate expenditure which would thus be involved for the equipment and transportation of such volunteers may be readily undertaken by the Government of Canada without summoning Parliament, especially as such an expenditure under such circumstances cannot be regarded as a departure from the well-known principles of constitutional government and colonial practice, nor construed as a precedent for future action.³³¹

³²⁸ NLS MS 12583, *Montreal Star*, 1 November 1899.

³²⁹ *LMCP I*, Minto to Laurier, 13 October 1899, Chamberlain to Minto, 13 October 1899, Minto to Chamberlain, 14 & 20 October 1899, pp. 148-64; Gordon, *Dominion Partnership*, p. 140; Marsh, *Entrepreneur in Politics*, pp. 472-75; Miller, *Map Red*, pp. 47-48; Miller, *Canadian Career*, p. 95; Page, *Boer War and Canadian Imperialism*, p. 12; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, p. 257; Willison, *Wilfrid Laurier*, pp. 313ff.

³³⁰ M. Beloff, *Britain's Liberal Empire, 1897-1921* (Methuen, London, 1969), p. 67; Skelton, *Life & Letters II*, p. 98

³³¹ *LMCP I*, Report of Privy Council Committee, 14 October 1899, pp. 154-55.

Minto, struggling to contain his 'downright contempt for what has taken place,' criticised the decision for attempting to minimise the official appearance of Canada's offer.³³² Recognising the trauma involved in reaching this stage, Minto felt it was important to maintain the Canadian character of the force, ensuring that it represented an appropriate national contribution, rather than just an offer of troops as Laurier wished, for which he was praised by Canadian historians: 'Here, as on some other occasions, one is impressed with Minto's rugged common sense and with the fact that he was a rather remarkably "good Canadian."' ³³³ Minto pursued the original objective of despatching a force 'consistent with the dignity of the Dominion,'³³⁴ believing that this would satisfy both Chamberlain and Canadian imperialist opinion. Although able to persuade the War Office to preserve the Canadian force as a distinct unit symbolising the policy of the self-governing colonies cooperating with Britain in enforcing imperial rule, Minto could not overcome Laurier's opposition to sending a contingent of all arms, 'more in consonance with the importance of Canada.'³³⁵

Minto remained heavily involved in all aspects of Canadian policy relating to South Africa, as it constituted a central aspect of his gubernatorial duty, although he was insistent that all offers of troops 'should emanate entirely from the Government of Canada.'³³⁶ His efforts to promote imperial enthusiasm, such as over the second contingent, did little to ease the friction with his government until it became evident from the problems Britain was encountering that colonial assistance was necessary as well as welcome. Minto's military experience and contacts in Britain were utilised to ensure the rapid mobilisation of subsequent contingents, and he was adamant that all the forces should be suitably representative of the Dominion and a source of pride. Thus he tried to ensure that the best troops, especially the under-used and eminently suitable material from the North West Mounted Police (despite the problems this created with Hutton), were being raised for each contingent, and for this reason came to doubt the quality of some of the later contingents. As part of his on-going campaign against political interference, Minto insisted that all

³³² LMCP I, Minto to Chamberlain, 20 & 27 October 1899, Minto to Wolseley, 22 October 1899, pp. 161-73; NLS MS 12561, Lord Minto's Correspondence with members of the Royal Family, November 1898 to November 1904, Minto to Queen Victoria, 12 November 1899.

³³³ Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, p. 71; Preston, in *Imperial Defense*, pp. 262-63, erroneously attributes the decision to Laurier.

³³⁴ LMCP I, Hutton to Minto, 17 July 1899, pp. 100-101.

³³⁵ LMCP I, Minto to Laurier, 12 October 1899, Laurier to Minto, 12 October 1899, pp. 145-46; Hutton to Minto, 15 & 16 October 1899, Minto to Chamberlain, 14 October 1899 (2 letters), Chamberlain to Minto, 16 October 1899, Minto to Hutton, 16 October 1899, Journal, 16 October 1899, Minto to Borden, 16 October 1899, pp. 149-58; Miller, *Map Red*, pp. 49-57; Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, pp. 67-68.

³³⁶ NLS MS 12557, Lord Minto's Official Canadian Correspondence, April 1900 to September 1901, Minto to Merritt, 13 & 24 March 1901.

officers be appointed according to merit, and was pleasantly surprised when it proved unnecessary to veto any appointments. Minto corresponded with both Canadian and British officers in South Africa throughout the conflict, and was able to ensure that conditions for the troops were comfortable or that their efforts were being properly recognised through the award of medals or honours.³³⁷

While undoubtedly pleased that Canada had belatedly, and occasionally reluctantly, done its part for the Empire, Minto was perturbed by the negative consequences of the policy in which he had invested so much effort. The poisonous atmosphere of the 1900 election afforded Minto a greater insight into the difficulties Laurier braved in stabilising Confederation, as an avalanche of ethnic and religious taunts buried Laurier's hopes that the admirable spectacle of French and British Canadians fighting together for a noble cause would promote national harmony. The Montreal student riots of March 1900 raised Minto's fears about the dangers posed by ethnic hostility, commenting that 'it would take a very small spark to make a racial blaze here.'³³⁸ Making his own efforts to reduce tension he stressed to his British correspondents that French Canadians were not disloyal, merely not British, and thus unlikely to be sympathetic to imperial action. Laurier's election victory was the best thing for Canadian stability, ensuring that he could not eloquently rally opposition to imperialist policies in Parliament.³³⁹ The emergence of nascent Canadian nationalism, expressed through boasts about their military prowess in comparison to Britain, not helped by the ill-informed praise lavished on Canadian troops, was equally concerning. As Minto stressed to Pauncefote, such ideas were 'a mistake full of mischief for the future here.'³⁴⁰ These early nationalist manifestations did not augur well for the success of Chamberlain's policies; as Morton argued, the contingents 'had embarked as soldiers of the Queen; they returned, for the most part as self-conscious Canadians.'³⁴¹

Chamberlain was anxious to utilise the 'surge' of imperialist sentiment created in the colonies by the South African war, believing it had provided a favourable atmosphere for introducing practical measures to strengthen the connecting bonds of Empire. Over-

³³⁷ For Minto's role in the organisation of the contingents, see his correspondence in *LMCP I & II*, particularly for October – December 1899, November 1901, and March 1902.

³³⁸ *LMCP I*, Journal, 22 July 1900, p. 377.

³³⁹ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 5 March 1900, pp. 310-11.

³⁴⁰ NLS MS 12556, Minto to Pauncefote, 14 February 1900.

³⁴¹ Morton, *Canada and War*, p. 43; Nasson, *South African War*, pp. 7-8.

optimistically basing his plans on the assumption that the tide of war was turning in Britain's favour,³⁴² Chamberlain explained to Minto that it was:

most important to take advantage [of the situation he expected to exist immediately after the war] in order to confirm and render permanent the unity of the British Empire which has been so magnificently demonstrated by the support given by the colonies to the Mother Country during the contest.³⁴³

He suggested two 'constitutional innovations,'³⁴⁴ for the colonies to be consulted in connection with the post-war settlement, and the creation of an imperial council to consider defence policy and act as permanent advisers to the Colonial Secretary, although comparing this with the Council of India was a most unfortunate analogy, implying colonial subordination and continued obligations to provide assistance without any increase in power.³⁴⁵ For Chamberlain, as during the contingent crisis, it was important for the colonies to initiate any moves in this direction, or at the very least, for Britain to be assured that its advances would be 'cordially reciprocated.' Admitting the vagueness of his ideas, Chamberlain nevertheless instructed Minto to investigate colonial opinion by consulting not only Laurier but other 'influential persons,' thus ascertaining levels of public and official support before proceeding any further with the project.³⁴⁶ Chamberlain's prioritisation of the former is interesting, indicating that he remembered the public outcry in response to Laurier's inaction during the contingent crisis, and that he relied upon another significant outburst of popular imperialism to force the reluctant Laurier to follow Britain's lead.

Initial signs for success appeared hopeful. A resolution proposing similar ideas had been introduced in the Canadian Senate and the Colonial Office believed that 'a more favourable opportunity cannot occur, and we should strike while the iron is hot.'³⁴⁷ Hopes were raised further by Laurier's speech in the House, which, like those in 1897, he would later regret:

³⁴² Brown & Cook, *Nation Transformed*, p. 43; R.H. Wilde, 'Joseph Chamberlain's Proposal of an Imperial Council in March 1900' *CHR* 37 (1956), pp. 225-27.

³⁴³ *LMCP I*, Chamberlain to Minto, 2 March 1900, pp. 306-8.

³⁴⁴ Marsh, *Entrepreneur in Politics*, pp. 488-92.

³⁴⁵ Preston, *Imperial Defense*, p. 279.

³⁴⁶ *LMCP I*, Chamberlain to Minto, 2 March 1900, pp. 306-8.

³⁴⁷ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 14 March 1900, Memo, 16 March 1900, pp. 315-18.

If you want us to take part in wars let us share not only the burdens but the responsibilities and duties as well...if you want us to help you, call us to your councils.³⁴⁸

Ever-optimistic, Chamberlain chose to ignore the ambivalence and interpret this as a 'green light' for his proposals. Through his enquiries, Minto discovered that, as Kendle argued, 'nothing of course, was further from the truth.'³⁴⁹ Despite Minto's efforts to persuade Laurier that tightening links with Britain would enhance imperial security, by arguing that 'we have few friends, and the component parts of the Empire cannot stand alone,' or urging even a non-committal indication that the proposals were acceptable to Canadians, Laurier remained unenthusiastic. Minto correctly identified that Laurier was apprehensive about French Canadian reactions to any discussion of imperial federation, fearing it would reignite ethnic hostilities. Laurier again reiterated that Canadian attention must be focused on internal development. As it was already expending considerable sums maintaining the militia for national defence, he did 'not think it would be a sound policy, at the present time, to ask Canada to apply a larger portion of revenue to a definite plan of Imperial military organisation.' Canada had given a solid indication that it could be relied upon to provide assistance; in the future this was more likely to be given voluntarily than under any detailed plan imposing fixed financial obligations. Canadians had little interest in a body established to organise plans for imperial defence, and continued to view existing relations as satisfactory. Any changes would evolve as the Empire adapted to new conditions, and in Laurier's view, any movement to hasten change would retard rather than advance imperial unity.³⁵⁰

Previous close contact with Laurier meant Minto was unsurprised by his response, but consultation with other 'influential persons' was actively discouraging. Few favoured the establishment of any advisory body, and while they did not wholly support Laurier, they agreed French sensitivity about taxation would prevent more definite action and, as Minto had argued, that 'sentimental connections' would prove more beneficial to the Empire than

³⁴⁸ Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, p. 73.

³⁴⁹ Kendle, *Colonial and Imperial Conferences*, p. 36; Marsh, *Entrepreneur in Politics*, pp. 488-92.

³⁵⁰ *LMCP I*, Memo, 16 March 1900, Minto to Laurier, 22 March 1900, Memo of Conversation with Laurier, 23 March 1900, Memo for HE the Governor General, 9 April 1900, pp. 316-18, 322-24, 334-35.

any defined responsibilities.³⁵¹ In outlining these unfavourable reactions to Chamberlain, Minto demonstrated a more detailed understanding of both public and official opinion in Ottawa than his superior ever managed. After his consultations, Minto concluded that ‘as regards the furtherance of imperial relations there must be great caution.’ Despite a great love for the ‘mother country’ and an eagerness to share in the Empire’s glories, few equated Canadian prosperity with imperial strength, nor exhibited any interest in assuming tangible responsibilities. Fear that increasing Canada’s obligations would entail greater military expenditure, which Minto criticised as indicating a selfish refusal to accept their liability to contribute to the defence of the Empire that protected them, had created widespread objections to suggestions like those made by Chamberlain. The vaguest inclinations towards ‘closer relations’ were detectable, and Minto felt that only by working with Laurier, for example by invitations to post-war conferences, could French Canadian indifference, a major obstacle to imperial reform, be overcome. Even here success was doubtful, as he suspected that Laurier dreamed of future Canadian independence. Canada considered imperial issues from a utilitarian viewpoint, focusing on what economic or political gains could be made, and this had to be used to Britain’s advantage. Thus the tariff question was a more productive path towards imperial unity than defence. Although Minto believed that the whole issue required ‘tender handling,’ he felt that progress could be made by initially strengthening sentimental connections.³⁵²

Infuriated by this unsatisfactory reply, Chamberlain unfairly blamed Minto for frightening Laurier by implying that his Advisory Council would produce immediate tax increases. He was equally annoyed that Laurier had responded negatively after his apparent invitation to advance towards union. Chamberlain was, however, forced to concede that if the colonies wanted no change in imperial relations, it was unwise to press them.³⁵³ Historians have suggested that he tried to emphasise the gradual nature of any progress towards federation, following the colonial lead and protecting their autonomy. But this is not apparent in his correspondence with Minto, where more stress was laid on the colonies assuming their fair share of responsibility before any undefined ‘voice’ in imperial affairs was granted. Continued military stalemate led many colonial leaders to question the efficacy of closer

³⁵¹ *LMCP I*, Memo of a Conversation between Lord Minto and Senator Drummond, 21 March 1900, Memo of a Conversation with Principal Grant, 16 March 1900, Memo of a Conversation with Mulock, 22 March, pp. 318-20, 324-25.

³⁵² *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 14 April 1900, pp. 338-41; NLS MS 12556, Minto to Chamberlain, 14 April 1900; Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 119-25; Wilde, ‘Imperial Council’, passim.

³⁵³ *LMCP I*, Chamberlain to Minto, 3 May 1900, pp. 348-49.

defence connections, thus destroying the slim hopes of success.³⁵⁴ As Messamore argues, Minto recognised the fundamental difficulty; British Canada was drawn to the idea of Empire, but loath to place Canada's control over its policies in the hands of an outside body, an idea central to Chamberlain's plans, even if they played a leading role therein. Most commentators agreed it would be a serious mistake to bind Canada to any formal obligation to provide money or men to imperial wars. Although Laurier saw the need to reconsider imperial relations if the consequence of sending the contingents was that Canada should take part in all British wars and contribute to imperial expenditure, many shared his views that much more could be got, as had been proved, by leaving the question to sentiment.³⁵⁵

Minto remained determined to harness the outburst of imperial enthusiasm created by perceived Canadian successes in South Africa, and continued to urge Laurier to seriously consider imperial issues up to the 1902 conference. Minto stressed to Parkin that 'a great deal of imperial benefit turns on the utilisation of imperial sympathy stirred up by this war,' if properly directed it could help to unite the Empire 'in one common cause,' although action on this front was urgently necessary as opportunities to encourage this feeling had already been lost.³⁵⁶ Preliminary, informal, steps towards this end, such as opening imperial careers to South African veterans, would demonstrate British appreciation of Canada's support and help to increase sentimental connections.³⁵⁷ Laurier could not be persuaded to alter his views, as Minto reported, 'he told me distinctly, *the* point he should wish to avoid was imperial defence...which could be taken to mean taxation for military purposes...' ³⁵⁸ Laurier recognised that Canada relied on British assistance but refused to support any measure entailing expenditure or obligation without any obvious benefit, or commit to a central council whose decisions may conflict with the policy of the Dominion government. Minto informed Chamberlain that Laurier believed 'that the time for closer relations in the direction of Imperial Federation has not yet arrived,' but he had come to recognise that this time would probably never arrive.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁴ Jay, *Political Study*, pp. 257-58; Kendle, *Colonial and Imperial Conferences*, p. 37; Marsh, *Entrepreneur in Politics*, pp. 488-92; Wilde, 'Imperial Council,' p. 245.

³⁵⁵ Messamore, 'Razor's Edge,' pp. 376-77, 382; Willison, *Laurier*, pp. 330ff.

³⁵⁶ *LMCP I*, Minto to Parkin, 9 September & 30 October 1901, pp. 71-72, 82-83.

³⁵⁷ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 24 November 1900, pp. 3435-38; *LMCP II*, Minto to Parkin, 30 October 1901, Minto to Arthur Elliot, 3 November 1901, pp. 82-87.

³⁵⁸ NLS MS 12557, Minto to Ommanney, 18 May 1901.

³⁵⁹ *LMCP II*, Minto to Chamberlain, 4 June 1901, Memo of Interviews with Laurier, 28 January & 19 March 1902, Minto to Laurier, 5 February 1902, pp. 44-46, 116-120, 131-33.

Minto continued to believe that stipulating conditions of obligatory military service or expenditure was a mistake, and that instead Canada should focus on enhancing its ability to safeguard its own portion of the Empire.³⁶⁰ A pragmatic acceptance of Canadian viewpoints did not lessen Minto's irritation at their attitude towards imperial issues, and he believed Laurier's refusal to even consider imperial defence at the forthcoming conference was 'the worst thing done in an imperial sense since I have been here...'³⁶¹ Aware that pressure from Britain would achieve little, Minto encouraged Parkin's campaign to pressure Laurier into actively discussing defence at the conference, but still complained that 'in an imperial sense the position is unsatisfactory and uncertain.'³⁶²

Minto's pessimism was well-founded. Chamberlain's hopes that the war would 'tend more than anything else to draw the Empire closer together,' were disappointed. As Judd argues, support from the self-governing colonies did not presage imperial federation. Imperial cooperation could not be taken for granted as 'the bonds of Empire were only as strong as the colonies chose to make them.'³⁶³ Colonial unwillingness to make larger contributions towards defence or accept greater centralisation in any form meant that little was achieved at the 1902 Conference beyond an agreement to hold further meetings.³⁶⁴ Chamberlain found it difficult to understand how Canada and Australia failed to see strength and safety lay in union or how they could with self-respect decline to bear their fair share of imperial burdens. He held Canada in particular contempt, damning them for 'doing less than any other part of the Empire for its own defence and for the general maintenance of imperial interests.' Laurier's attitude exasperated Chamberlain, having 'never appreciated how little [he] did compared with how much he eloquently said.' Lady Minto tried to defend Laurier as a gentleman, but this did little to assuage Chamberlain, who commented that he 'would rather do business with a cad who knew his own mind.' Laurier was equally surprised that Chamberlain could not appreciate the view of the self-governing colonies that the Empire's strength lay in local autonomy, diversity and freedom. Opposing commitments and

³⁶⁰ *LMCP II*, Memo of Interview with Laurier, 19 March 1902, Minto to Parkin, 4 May 1902, pp. 131-33, 153-54.

³⁶¹ *LMCP II*, Minto to Parkin, 27 March 1902, Minto to Bigge 29 March 1902, pp. 137-42.

³⁶² *LMCP II*, Parkin to Minto, 24 March & 26 April 1902, Minto to Bigge, 29 March 1902, pp. 133-35, 140-42, 151-52; NLS MS 12570, Parkin to Minto, 28 April 1902.

³⁶³ Judd, *Radical Joe*, pp. 220-21.

³⁶⁴ Gordon, *Dominion Partnership*, pp. 144-64; Jay, *Political Study*, pp. 257-60; Kendle, *Colonial and Imperial Conferences*, passim; O'Brien, 'Titan Refreshed', pp. 150-51; Preston, *Imperial Defense*, pp. 286-87, 305-306; R.A. Shields, 'Wilfrid Laurier and Canadian Defence Autonomy, 1902-1911' *Dalhousie Review* 63 (1983), pp. 298-304; Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, pp. 74ff.

insisting on greater colonial responsibility rather than imperial centralisation, Laurier argued that sentimental connections rather than pre-arranged official participation would encourage Canada to respond in an emergency. Such attitudes forced Chamberlain to abandon the military and political routes to imperial unity and turn to a more detailed consideration of economic approaches; an idea which Minto had suggested held greater hopes of success.³⁶⁵

Minto remained frustrated by Laurier's indifference to imperial issues when the opportunity had been offered to achieve so much, and he agreed that the Australians appeared 'sunder.' But he could not accept that the whole blame for the meagre results could be attributed solely to Laurier. Britain was equally responsible for failing to grasp the importance of colonial possibilities, and he doubted Chamberlain was in touch with colonial sentiment. While undoubtedly strong, Chamberlain was unsympathetic and unable to endear himself to other statesmen, a vital attribute when dealing with sensitive colonial politicians, and he was 'therefore not without risk in his colonial admin.'³⁶⁶

Minto's insistence on his right to protect imperial interests ensured that the issue remained controversial and capable of creating friction. Speeches, like that to the Montreal Board of Trade in September 1902, arguing that as Britain was obligated to defend the Empire, the Dominion had a responsibility to maintain efficient forces on which Britain could rely in imperial wars, thus making it important for the Empire to work together against external threats, provoked considerable criticism, despite his admission that any future contributions would be dependent on colonial public opinion.³⁶⁷ Nationalist historians overplay the resulting furore,³⁶⁸ focusing on the attacks by vocal critics like Bourassa, which were fuelled by press misinterpretation of Minto's views; as many people supported the Governor's opinions, and he was publicly defended by Laurier. Minto believed that the uproar that had resulted had 'been beneficial as a whole, as indicating how utterly opposed the extreme French section is to any imperial responsibility.'³⁶⁹

³⁶⁵ Brown & Cook, *Nation Transformed*, pp. 43-44; Cook, *Canada*, p. 176; Gordon, *Dominion Partnership*, pp. 160-64; Monet, 'Canada', p. 178; Neuendorff, *Evolution of Dominion Status*, p. 107; Quinalt, 'Reassessment', p. 87; Shields 'Defence Autonomy', pp. 302-4; Skelton, *Life and Letters II*, pp. 298-99; Wade, *French Canadians*, pp. 490-95.

³⁶⁶ *LMCP II*, Journal, 20 July 1902, pp. 174-75; NLS MS 12558, Minto to Chamberlain, 23 September 1902.

³⁶⁷ NLS MS 12581, Speech to Montreal Board of Trade, 8 September 1902.

³⁶⁸ *LMCP II*, Journal, 26 August 1903, n.1, p. 336; Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 126-30.

³⁶⁹ *LMCP II*, Journal, 31 August 1903, Minto to Ross, 31 August 1903, Conversation with Laurier, 31 August 1903, Minto to Willison, 1 September 1903, Minto to Chamberlain, 17 September 1903, pp. 336-43.

Chamberlain increasingly valued Minto's opinions and insights into Canadian attitudes, extending the Governor's term to assist in the implementation of his policies. Minto had continued to consider the difficulties involved in strengthening imperial ties with Canada. His enthusiasm for Canada to make greater contributions to, or accept greater responsibilities for, imperial defence never waned, but he recognised that it 'appears to be a subject to be which [Laurier's government] would wish to avoid,' and that 'nothing will din it into them.'³⁷⁰ Chamberlain berated the Canadian government for their inaction:

Canada alone of the great colonies repudiates its obligation to do anything more than to provide in its own way without any control, and even without much consultation in common for its own defence.

But these efforts, along with those to flatter Canadian vanity by highlighting its failure to occupy a position commensurate with its imagined importance, achieved nothing.³⁷¹ Minto was frustrated that opportunities to foster the enthusiasm ignited by the Boer War and utilise it to strengthen Britain's imperial military position had been wasted, but he was convinced that attempts to impose formal obligations were merely counter-productive and he never wavered from a belief that reliance on sentimental connections offered more hope of success.³⁷² New ideas had emerged about Canadian defence, influenced by nationalist sentiment. Minto agreed with Clarke's assessment that the colonies expected British support to protect their interests, but did 'not recognise their corresponding responsibilities,'³⁷³ but as even Chamberlain accepted, it was 'impossible...to force our views with regard to Imperial defence upon the colonies.'³⁷⁴ Minto believed it was wisest to allow the Dominion to develop its own forces, and rely on them providing hearty cooperation in defending the Empire rather than trying to make them part of any general

³⁷⁰ *LMCP II*, Minto Willison, 4 July 1903, Minto to Chamberlain, 17 July 1903, pp. 312-15, 321-25.

³⁷¹ NLS MS 12568, Lord Minto's Correspondence with Joseph Chamberlain, November 1898 to November 1904, Chamberlain to Fielding, 2 April 1903.

³⁷² *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 7 March 1904, Minto to Parkin, 26 September 1904, pp. 432-35, 538-46; NLS MS 12559, Lord Minto's Official Canadian Correspondence, March 1903 to June 1904, Minto to Roberts, 19 April 1903.

³⁷³ NLS MS 12580, Lord Minto's Canadian Military and Naval Correspondence, January 1902 to March 1905, Clarke to Minto, 11 May 1904; Page, *Imperialism and Canada*, pp. 11-15.

³⁷⁴ *LMCP II*, Chamberlain to Minto, 17 August 1904, pp. 528-29.

defence system, supporting his brother's view that 'we ought to expect each colony to think of itself first, and of the Empire only in the second degree.'³⁷⁵

As Minto tried to promote trade as an alternative method of strengthening imperial links his continued analysis of Canadian reluctance to accept Chamberlain's policies identified several factors. Perceived British indifference to the colonies had done little to promote their aims:

The ultra-imperialists at home who talk of recognised contributions from the colonies of men and money simply don't know the feeling of the colonies...[such proposals] show in my opinion a want of appreciation of the growing strength of the growing aspirations of the young nationalities we call colonies.³⁷⁶

He feared that apparent British apathy would only alienate Canadian opinion. Britain had to recognise the growth of nationalism in the colonies, but simultaneously provide leadership and direction,³⁷⁷ something only possible if its leaders gained greater experience of their Empire. Minto also believed that local factors hindered imperial integration. He recognised that Quebec was not overtly disloyal but could not be expected to share Ontario's enthusiasm or view of Canadian national interests. While sympathising with Laurier's difficulties in maintaining national solidarity, his apparent indifference to imperial issues perplexed and annoyed Minto: 'Sir Wilfrid is very unsatisfactory in a big imperial sense. I can't make him out on that point.'³⁷⁸ Laurier was too much of an opportunist, willing to bend to imperial enthusiasm when unavoidable or advantageous, as during the contingents crisis, but it was never a settled policy, and Minto blamed him for the failure to utilise the opportunities presented to strengthen the Empire: 'a Prime Minister of more pronounced British sympathies might have strengthened public opinion here.'³⁷⁹ A parochial failure to recognise that Canadian security rested on imperial strength existed throughout the Dominion, and as Minto lamented, was compounded by the absence of strong leadership: 'no Canadian statesman of either side is honestly anxious to direct' the

³⁷⁵ *LMCP II*, Minto to A. Elliot, 1 March 1903, pp. 263-66; NLS Arthur Elliot Papers, MS 19476, Correspondence between Lord Minto and Arthur Elliot, 1902 to 1908, A. Elliot to Minto, 1 February 1903.

³⁷⁶ *LMCP II*, Minto to Peter, 17 October 1902, pp. 203-5. See also, Minto to A. Elliot, 1 March 1903 & Minto to Chamberlain, 17 May 1903, pp. 263-66, 296-98.

³⁷⁷ *LMCP II*, Minto to Chamberlain, 17 July 1903, Minto to A. Elliot, 24 August 1903, pp. 321-25, 334-35.

³⁷⁸ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lady Minto, 15 June 1904, pp. 484-85.

³⁷⁹ *LMCP II*, Minto to Edward VII, 18 December 1903, Minto to Parkin, 26 September 1904, pp. 396-97, 538-46.

latent imperial enthusiasm. Interestingly, Minto recognised that attempting to strengthen the Governor's role in this respect would have been self-defeating; there was little point in Britain's representative acting as a public leader of imperialist sentiment when the aim was for this to evolve naturally, moreover, any attempt to do so would have been furiously resented by Canadians. To Minto this was a manifestation of growing nationalist sentiment, together with a resentment of, and sensitivity towards, any perceived imperial interference. He concluded that 'the strongest feeling...is that of Canadian nationality,' however, like many contemporaries, he did not believe this incompatible with imperialism. Nevertheless, the two required careful management to avoid the risk of Britain's unsympathetic attitude, demonstrated during the Alaska dispute, driving Canadians to believe their choice was between independence and annexation.³⁸⁰

During the last two years of his tenure, Minto watched, often with barely suppressed resentment, the dissipation of the imperial feeling in Canada that had appeared to be the precursor of great imperial achievements. During the South African war Canada seemed to have indicated a willingness to accept some responsibility for imperial defence. But, not for want of effort on Minto's part, opportunities to utilise the undoubted imperial sentiment were wasted. Familiarity with local attitudes enabled him to understand that British and Dominion perceptions of 'imperial responsibility' bore little resemblance to each other, but it was only with difficulty that he persuaded his superiors to accept that attempting to force a reluctant Canada to accept new obligations would accomplish nothing. Instead, reliance on English-Canada's sentimental connection to the 'mother country,' and its preference for schemes providing definite material advantage, offered a more viable route towards tightening imperial links. Despite his warnings little could be done to counter widespread beliefs that Britain was indifferent to its self-governing colonies, and when this became accepted policy under the Liberals, Canada made another step towards nationhood.

³⁸⁰ *LMCP II*, Minto to Chamberlain, 17 July 1903, Minto to Lyttelton, 19 November 1903 & 7 March 1904, Minto to Edward VII, 18 December 1903, Minto to Parkin, 26 September 1904, pp. 321-25, 376-77, 396-97, 432-34, 538-46.

Minto, Canada and the Emerging 'Special Relationship'

As Canadian autonomy did not extend to its external affairs, much of this responsibility was devolved to the Governor-General. Lorne, himself an ex-Governor, explained to Minto that it was 'a position which is certainly as important as that of the Indian Viceroyalty, because [although] it covers a smaller country than India, it has relation to the US of A.'³⁸¹ The Governor had to explain British policy to Canada, but was also uniquely positioned to analyse the Dominion's viewpoint and protect their interests. He could use his influence with the British, Canadian and American governments to smooth the path towards greater understanding, although this did not always prove successful.³⁸² Governors with aristocratic backgrounds were believed to be more suited to these diplomatic duties. Minto's tenure in Ottawa coincided with an intense period of Anglo-American rapprochement and much of his time was occupied by attempts to reconcile Canada to this process. His dislike of America has been criticised by nationalist Canadian historians who argue that, in contrast to what the more positive Grey achieved, it reinforced Laurier's prejudices and prevented a satisfactory resolution of outstanding difficulties.³⁸³ Such attacks are unfair, forgetting that Minto was burdened with more complex issues than those encountered by Grey, and attributing too much influence to local actors over policies rigidly controlled by the Foreign Office, which remained reluctant to delegate any responsibility to men it believed incapable of seeing the Empire's interests in overview. Minto's attitude was more complex than suggested. While appreciative of the importance of Anglo-American understanding and doing his best to further it, his imperialist outlook meant much stress was laid on the need to accommodate Canadian susceptibilities.³⁸⁴

Minto sincerely doubted America's value as potential allies, believing they were unreliable and that their commitment to friendship was untrustworthy: 'No one for an instant expects fair play from the States in either business or sport.'³⁸⁵ Cultivating links with the self-governing colonies was a more satisfactory way of strengthening Britain's position without sacrificing any vital interests. Minto feared the likely impact of Britain's desire to chase American friendship on Canada. Being lukewarm to their interests for the sake of transatlantic harmony or displaying ignorance of Canadian affairs while lavishing attention

³⁸¹ NLS MS 12390, Lorne to Minto, 26 July 1898.

³⁸² Messamore, 'Razor's Edge', pp. 386-89; Neuendorff, *Evolution of Dominion Status*, pp. 30, 177-78.

³⁸³ A. Gluek, 'The Passamaquoddy Bay Treaty, 1910' *CHR* 47(1966), pp. 6-7; Preston, *Defence of an Undefended Border*, pp. 198-99.

³⁸⁴ Miller, *Canadian Career*, p. 157.

³⁸⁵ *LMCP I*, Minto to A. Elliot, 9 August 1899, pp. 113-14.

on America threatened to damage intra-imperial relations. Minto frequently voiced these concerns to his correspondents, urging Britain to remember Canada's concerns about its powerful southern neighbour:

In fact there is a general dislike of the Yankees here – & I don't wonder at it at all. It's all very well for people in England to romance about the sentimental love of the Anglo-Saxon races on either side of the Atlantic but mercifully England has the ocean between her and her love – here there is nothing of the sort;³⁸⁶

and warning that 'too demonstrative a declaration of affection for the States may be taken as indicating a want of sympathy for Canada.'³⁸⁷ Canada's fear of US intentions created a heightened anti-Americanism that encouraged the pursuit of more avowedly imperial policies as they turned to Britain for support. This imperialist outlook did not quash the simultaneous fears that manifestations of loyalty would not prevent the sacrifice of Canada's national interests to rapprochement with America, a prospect they viewed with some ambivalence.³⁸⁸

Although the vogue for 'Anglo-Saxonism' provided a catalyst, rapprochement after the Venezuela crisis was driven by Britain's desire to protect its interests in the face of increasingly precarious isolation. Realising that war with the US would have proved disastrous, Britain courted American friendship to secure its position by offering concessions to resolve outstanding difficulties and abandoning its pretensions to supremacy in the Western Hemisphere. Differing Canadian conceptions of what constituted vital imperial interests in the region, and their stubborn resistance to any perceived attempts to sacrifice these, made Ottawa the main obstacle to such efforts, indeed diplomatic difficulties often arose because of Canada. Britain, however, refused to allow these minor irritations to derail negotiations, and relied on its representative to explain to Canada that it would be the main beneficiary of improved Anglo-American relations.³⁸⁹ The Alaska Boundary dispute dominated Anglo-American relations during

³⁸⁶ *LMCP I*, Minto to A. Elliot, 26 February 1899, pp. 37-39.

³⁸⁷ *LMCP I*, Minto to Lansdowne, 27 January 1899, p. 32.

³⁸⁸ J. Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1945), p. 245; Brown & Cook, *Nation Transformed*, pp. 28-29; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, passim.

³⁸⁹ I. Adams, *Brothers Across the Ocean* (IB Tauris, London, 2005); H.C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1952* (Odhams, London, 1952), p. 556; H.K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1956), pp. 81ff; M. Beloff, 'The Special Relationship: An Anglo-American Myth' in M. Gilbert

Minto's tenure. Settlement became pressing after the discovery of gold in 1895, but the founding of the existing arrangements on the vague 1825 Anglo-Russian treaty, 'an inadequate instrument for determining the boundary,'³⁹⁰ complicated attempts to reach agreement. The treaty's failure to properly identify the geographical features key to any definition of the boundary, such as the Portland Channel, created conflicting Canadian and American claims. If the treaty had been interpreted in strictly judicial terms, Canada's case was potentially strong. But their position was fatally undermined by a failure to challenge American possession of an important part of the disputed territory, notably the towns of Skagway and Dyea, or to protest against the production of maps which contradicted their contention. The coincidence of Canadian claims with the gold discoveries made them appear as a trumped-up afterthought to gain economic advantage, merely strengthening America's determination not to yield.³⁹¹

Minto could have little influence on initial efforts to settle these outstanding difficulties, as he arrived in Ottawa during the negotiations of the Joint High Commission that had been appointed to eliminate potential sources of tension, although he voiced his hopes for some minor successes upon which they could build.³⁹² Canadian refusal to accept various proposals to arrive at a reasonable compromise, notably that made by the American delegates to grant them commercial privileges around Pyramid Harbour, led to the collapse of the Commission in February 1899. It became evident that Canada's inflexibility, founded on a naïve belief that Britain would support their every move and Laurier's desire to portray his government as the defenders of Canadian interests, would prove the principal obstacle to agreement over Alaska. Minto lamented the failure of the commission for the damage it had done to Canadian-American relations. Subsequently he was able to establish an important role as an intermediary between Canada and Britain in the negotiations to reach an understanding over Alaska.³⁹³ However, as Laurier favoured submitting the dispute to arbitration on Canadian terms, which insisted on including all territory, it proved difficult to persuade him to accept the proposed solutions for grants of land and railway

(ed.) *A Century of Conflict, 1850-1950* (London, 1966), pp. 154-162; Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations*, pp. 17-19; C.S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding, 1898-1903* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1957); Hyam, *Imperial Century*, pp. 231-36; Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, pp. 99ff; Orde, *Eclipse of a Great Power*, pp. 1-38; Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement*, passim.

³⁹⁰ R.C. Brown, *Canada's National Policy: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (Greenwood, Westport, Princeton, 1964), p. 286.

³⁹¹ Brown, *Canada's National Policy*, pp. 302ff; N. Penlington, *The Alaska Boundary Dispute* (McGraw Hill-Ryerson, Toronto, 1972), pp. 33-38.

³⁹² *LMCP I*, Minto to Pauncefote, 23 November 1898, pp. 18-19.

³⁹³ Miller, *Canadian Career*, p. 161.

construction rights around the Lynn Canal, despite Colonial Office warnings that 'prolongation of the existing state of things is in favour of the US.'³⁹⁴ Minto's warnings about the potential impact on hopes for imperial unity of any apparent lack of sympathy with Canadian aspirations influenced Britain's decision not to attempt to impose a solution on Ottawa when they were trying to obtain military support for South Africa. Laurier accepted the 'modus vivendi' agreement of October 1899, but his determination to extract maximum domestic political advantage from his defence of Canadian interests made him oblivious of the wider diplomatic and strategic difficulties facing Britain.³⁹⁵

Prior to the South African war British refusal to modify the Clayton-Bulwer treaty governing construction of an isthmian canal, without reciprocal concessions on Alaska, had hindered negotiations. America exploited Britain's imperial difficulties to its own advantage, although Britain, conscious of its isolation, was determined not to alienate its only friend. The Foreign Office swiftly dropped its previous insistence on keeping the issues interdependent,³⁹⁶ leaving the Colonial Office to stress to Ottawa Britain's reluctance to abandon its support of Canadian wishes given its valuable support in South Africa, but that it had to discuss the issue to prevent the unilateral passage of the unfavourable Hepburn Bill. Minto was enlisted to persuade Laurier that Canada and the Empire would benefit from the convention Pauncefoot was negotiating to protect Britain's position. Flattering the Premier's vanity to encourage his acceptance of the agreement, by arguing that 'you will recognise the immense importance at the present time of our relations with the US and I know how much HMG rely on your personal endeavours in this matter,' produced some positive result as Laurier admitted he could not hesitate to accede to Britain's request.³⁹⁷ Yet Canada, annoyed that its 'only diplomatic weapon of any force on the Alaska boundary' had been abandoned, continued to complain about the loss of considerable advantages. However, their rejection of Hay's efforts to solve the Alaska difficulty before ratification of the convention made them equally to blame, and the emergence of the dynamic and aggressive Roosevelt, eager to control his own foreign

³⁹⁴ TNA CO 42/868 CO Minutes, 14 May, 8 & 22 June 1899.

³⁹⁵ Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, p. 239. See also Penlington, *Alaska Boundary*, pp. 48ff; Brown, *Canada's National Policy*, pp. 395ff; Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, pp. 149-50.

³⁹⁶ J.A.S. Grenville, 'Britain and the Isthmian Canal, 1898-1901' *American Historical Review* 61 (1955), pp. 48-69; K. Bourne & D.C. Watt (eds.) *British Documents on Foreign Affairs Part I Series C, North America, 1837-1914, Vol. 11, Expansion and Rapprochement*, Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 19 September 1901, p. 198; Adams, *Brothers Across the Ocean*, pp. 93-98.

³⁹⁷ *LMCP I*, Chamberlain to Minto, 30 January 1900, Minto to Laurier, 31 January 1900, Laurier to Minto, 31 January 1900, Minto to Chamberlain, 1 February 1900, pp. 256-58; Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, pp. 190-91; Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, pp. 90-91; W.N. Tilchin, 'The United States and the Boer War' in Wilson (ed.) *The International Impact of the Boer War*, pp. 118-19.

policy and jealous of American sovereignty, meant that for Canada 'bitter disappointment lay ahead.'³⁹⁸

Canada remained committed to referring the dispute to an odd-numbered arbitration tribunal if it could not be settled by compromise. Unable to coerce Ottawa to accept the proposals put forward by Hay for a tribunal of 'six impartial jurists of repute' to determine the boundary, Britain relied on persuasion, affording considerable influence to Minto. Contacts with the British military attaché in Washington heightened his concern about two developments, pushing him to make a decisive intervention to push Canada towards final settlement. Alarming rumours circulated about conspiracies among American miners to overthrow the Yukon authorities³⁹⁹ and combined with disturbing reports about Roosevelt's attitude to the issue, which hinted at grave consequences if the dispute was not settled in America's favour,⁴⁰⁰ to strengthen Minto's resolve to have the issue settled. He urged Laurier to use the opportunity provided by the forthcoming coronation to meet with Lansdowne and Choate to settle arrangements informally and avoid being outmanoeuvred by the 'impetuous' Roosevelt.⁴⁰¹ The meetings proved to be decisively important, as Laurier, fearing the consequences of further gold discoveries and Roosevelt's aggressive policies, made significant concessions that struck at the root of the deadlock, by agreeing to exempt Dyea and Skagway from any arbitration and accepting the creation of an even-numbered tribunal, leading Anderson to complain that 'after making all the trouble for the last three or four years [Laurier] has made an abject surrender of all the US ask for.'⁴⁰²

Minto remained sympathetic to Canada, stressing that they could not be expected to accept the 'unqualified surrender' of all their claims, and urging Britain not to attempt to compel Ottawa to accept unpopular measures.⁴⁰³ After having expended much effort persuading Laurier to accept the agreement in principle and making assurances to British officials that

³⁹⁸ Brown & Cook, *Nation Transformed*, p. 45; Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, p. 92.

³⁹⁹ *LMCP II*, Minto to Chamberlain, 23 November & 24 December 1901, pp. 91-92, 107-8; NLS MS 12581, Lord Minto's Correspondence with his Canadian Ministers and Miscellaneous Canadian Papers, November 1898 to November 1904, Meeting with Busby, 7 January 1902.

⁴⁰⁰ *LMCP II*, Kitson to Minto, 28 March, 13 & 24 May 1902, pp. 139-40, 154-55, 161-62.

⁴⁰¹ *LMCP II*, Minto to Kitson, 17 May 1902, Minto to Laurier, 17 May 1902, Journal, 3 June 1902, Interview with Laurier, 3 June 1902, Minto to Lansdowne, 4 June 1902, Lansdowne to Minto, 15 June 1902 pp. 156-57, 165-69.

⁴⁰² *LMCP II*, Conversation with Laurier and Lansdowne, 24 June 1902, pp. 170-71; Adams, *Brothers Across the Ocean*, pp. 100ff; Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, pp. 256-58; Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 164-65; Penlington, *Alaska Boundary*, pp. 63-64.

⁴⁰³ *LMCP II*, Conversation with Laurier, 21 October 1902, Minto to Herbert, 21 October 1902, pp. 205-10.

this was the case, renewed Canadian obstruction of the Hay-Herbert Treaty, characterised by repeated attempts to get the tribunal modified, infuriated Minto, who believed the Canadians were aware such requests would not be granted. The governor was able to persuade Laurier that further resistance was futile; further delay in accepting what was potentially the best offer Canada would receive might anger the US into changing its mind.⁴⁰⁴ Minto reminded his superiors about Canadian fears that Britain would sacrifice its interests ‘on account of an exaggerated estimate of the value and reliability of the friendship of the US.’⁴⁰⁵ Such concerns were heightened by the furious debate that erupted about the composition of the tribunal. Canada had agreed to the appointment of a tribunal composed of ‘six impartial jurists of repute’ to consider the 1825 treaty in a judicial manner on the grounds that the American representatives would be Supreme Court justices. Instead, to ease the passage of the agreement through the notoriously Anglophobic Senate, Roosevelt appointed Root, Lodge and Turner, who were either members of the administration and technically disputants in the case or vocal public critics of Canadian contentions, and thus men unlikely to concede an inch of US territory.⁴⁰⁶

Roosevelt’s nominations confirmed Minto’s worst opinions about America’s disrespect for fair play; he shared Canada’s outrage at the ‘flagrant violation of the terms of the treaty’ and complained bitterly about the ‘the disgraceful behaviour of the US.’⁴⁰⁷ In Minto’s view, America’s failure to adhere to a central tenet of the treaty had damaged the judicial nature of the tribunal by undermining its supposed impartiality, while the publicly expressed opinions of their representatives had created an atmosphere of suspicion and bitterness. Minto, fulfilling an important gubernatorial duty by representing Canadian concerns that their interests were being ignored, warned that accepting the proposed US nominations would provoke a ‘storm’ of resentment against Britain.⁴⁰⁸ Whitehall was determined that Canadian objections would not disrupt the prospect of a long-awaited settlement and refused to permit any criticism of the American appointments or countenance any suggestions that negotiations be broken off. Instead, recognising Minto’s

⁴⁰⁴ *LMCP II*, Conversation with Laurier, 19 January 1903, Minto to Lansdowne, 23 January 1903, pp. 248-53; NLS MS 12558, Lord Minto’s Official Canadian Correspondence, September 1901 to March 1903, Minto to Herbert, 30 December 1902 & 12 January 1903, Minto to Laurier, 13 January 1903; *BD Vol. 11*, Minto to Chamberlain, 13 January 1903, pp. 282-83.

⁴⁰⁵ *BD Vol. 11*, Minto to Onslow, 9 February 1903, pp. 288-91.

⁴⁰⁶ Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt*, pp. 118-21; Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, p. 315; Penlington, *Alaska Boundary*, pp. 71-72; Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, pp. 95-96.

⁴⁰⁷ *LMCP II*, Minto to Laurier, 18 February 1903, n.1, Minto to Onslow, 19 February 1903, Minto to A. Elliot, 1 March 1903, pp. 255-56, 263-66.

⁴⁰⁸ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lansdowne, 19 February 1903, pp. 265-57; NLS MS 12558, Minto to Herbert, 19 February 1903.

influence over Laurier's government, they and the Colonial Office suggested he urge his ministers to consider the situation carefully.⁴⁰⁹ Although he lamented Britain's failure to stand up to American bullying and feared that their acquiescence was setting a 'dangerous precedent,' Minto's views influenced the selection of Britain's representatives. He argued that appointing partisans would destroy any remaining semblance of impartiality a diplomatic tribunal ought to possess, and that therefore making legal appointments would vindicate British honour:

In that case we ourselves would appear in the eyes of the world as dealing seriously with the question before us...whilst the inferior US appointments would lose weight in front of our big guns, and their Government would lose reputation in appointing them...⁴¹⁰

These suggestions were accepted, but failure to consult Canada before final ratification of the treaty merely heightened Laurier's annoyance, which manifested itself in unfair criticism of Minto for not insisting strongly enough that conditions should have been attached to British acceptance of the final format of the Tribunal.⁴¹¹ Minto had tried throughout to ensure that Canadian interests were not neglected, but his warnings about the damage caused by apparent sacrifice of Canadian interests for the sake of American friendship were little heeded outside the Colonial Office, and he lacked the influence to overcome Foreign Office determination to reach an understanding.

The Tribunal's decision in October 1903, particularly Lord Alverstone's support of the American contention to produce an agreement, ignited an explosion of nationalist fury in Canada. Alverstone's action lent credence to the complaint voiced by the Canadian delegates that rather than being based on judicial consideration of the evidence, the decision constituted a diplomatic compromise yet again sacrificing Canadian national interests for the sake of friendship with the detested Yankees. Disgusted by this perceived injustice, the Canadian justices complained vociferously in the press and refused to sign the award, thus leaving behind 'a generation of bitterness.'⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ *LMCP II*, Onslow to Minto, 26 February 1903, pp. 261-62; *BD Vol. 11*, Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 25 February 1903, pp. 290-91; Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 165-68.

⁴¹⁰ *LMCP II*, Minto to Laurier, 23 February 1903, p. 259.

⁴¹¹ *LMCP II*, Conversation with Laurier, 7 March 1903, p. 271-72.

⁴¹² Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle*, p. 257. See for example D. Morton, 'Providing and Consuming Security in Canada's Century' *CHR 81* (2000), p. 11.

An indignant belief grew in Canada that Britain could no longer be relied upon to protect its interests. Laurier described the decision as ‘one of those concessions which have made British diplomacy odious to Canadian people, and it will have a most lamentable effect,’ while the press bemoaned that ‘the hardest blow the imperial idea has ever received’ marked the ‘parting of the ways.’⁴¹³ Minto now faced one of the most trying periods of his Canadian career, noting in his journal that ‘the Alaska decision very worrying as regards the effect it has produced here – Canadian newspapers and public having lost all reason!’⁴¹⁴ He now faced the difficult task of attempting to assuage Canadian fury while explaining their grievances to his superiors in London to encourage them to make some official response to Ottawa’s accusations. Minto achieved some successes. To Laurier’s annoyance, he dismissed claims that the decision had damaged Canada’s strategic position in the North-west.⁴¹⁵ Worried by the ‘open talk of “separation,”’ he was also able to counter Laurier’s arguments that Canada needed more extensive powers to sufficiently protect its interests. Minto stressed to Laurier that Britain could not consent to arrangements allowing Canada to enter into agreements with foreign powers about territory it could not defend, and made his best efforts to quash the idea before it could develop further by playing on Canadian reluctance to pay for its own defensive requirements: ‘if Canada wishes to possess complete treaty-making powers, she must be prepared to back her claims with her own forces.’⁴¹⁶

Minto’s attempts to prevent Canadian anger from disturbing imperial harmony were not assisted by Colonial Office inaction, a situation exacerbated by Chamberlain’s resignation, or Laurier’s willingness to exploit the situation for political gain, which encouraged his rejection of the Governor’s suggestions that he take some action to ‘dispel the mischievous and entirely erroneous opinions that seem to be gaining ground.’⁴¹⁷ Minto, annoyed by Laurier’s failure to quiet the gathering storm, grew anxious that the Alaska decision had given focus to the usually aimless Canadian national sentiment, now manifesting itself in ingratitude for British assistance and anger at perceived interference. Unless checked, it

⁴¹³ Quoted in J.A. Munro (ed.), *The Alaska Boundary Dispute* (Copp & Clark, Toronto, 1970), pp. 88-93.

⁴¹⁴ *LMCP II*, Journal, 22 October 1903, p. 351.

⁴¹⁵ *LMCP II*, Minto to Laurier, 22 October 1903, pp. 351-53; *BD Vol. 11*, Directors of Military and Naval Intelligence Reports on Strategic Aspects of Alaska Boundary, 21 & 22 October 1903, pp. 325-26; NLS MS 12577, Dundonald to Borden, 8 March 1904.

⁴¹⁶ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 25 October 1903, pp. 355-59.

⁴¹⁷ *LMCP II*, Minto to Laurier, 22 October 1903, pp. 351-53.

would fatally damage chances for imperial federation. Increasingly concerned after his discussions with the leading Canadian politicians involved in the decision, he urged on Lyttelton the necessity of counteracting ‘the harm that had been done by the unjustifiable utterances of the Canadian representatives,’ which accused Alverstone of making little effort to reach a judicial finding and summarily dismissing Canadian contentions to secure a diplomatic settlement. Minto suggested issuing an official statement countering such claims, indicating that the case had been decided on its merits and offering reassurance that Britain still supported Canada and had not injured their interests for the sake of American friendship.⁴¹⁸ The Colonial Office believed Minto had ‘done his best’ to assuage Canadian anger, but did not share his determination to defend Alverstone or refute the Canadian accusations, believing that ‘the whole matter is most unfortunate but it is distinctly a case in which the least said the soonest mended.’ Their decision to ‘let the matter severely alone,’⁴¹⁹ to avoid upsetting new-found Anglo-American harmony and based on a belief that a British statement would not improve the situation, merely served to further indicate to Minto British indifference to Dominion attitudes, against which colonial governors perpetually had to struggle, although it also reflected that Chamberlain’s departure had reduced the Colonial Office’s ability to challenge the Foreign Office in any policy dispute.

Still concerned that the affront to British honour had not been corrected, Minto offered his own apology to Alverstone for Canadian criticisms of his action and expressed his hope that Britain would take some action to challenge mistaken Canadian impressions, but his attempts to reconcile Laurier and the Chief Justice came to nothing. Minto recognised that further public discussion of the Alaskan issue would be undignified and counter-productive, and believed that the ‘gross unfairness’ of Canada’s accusation would be revealed in time.⁴²⁰ He remained annoyed not only that advice relating to an issue with which he was intimately acquainted had been ignored, but also that an opportunity to undermine the foundations of Canadian anger that threatened to destabilise imperial relations had been lost. Instead, he complained, they had provided nationalists with another

⁴¹⁸ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 25 October, 18 & 19 November 1903, pp. 370-77.

⁴¹⁹ TNA CO 42/893, Correspondence between the Secretary of State and Dominion of Canada, August to December 1903, CO Minutes, 18 November 1903; *LMCP II*, Minto to Alverstone, 8 December 1903, pp. 384-87.

⁴²⁰ *LMCP II*, Minto to Alverstone, 8 December 1903, Laurier to Minto, 23 December 1903, pp. 384-87, 397-98; TNA CO 42/893, Laurier to Alverstone, 22 December 1903; NLS MS 12559, Minto to Lyttelton, 24 December 1903, Minto to Alverstone, 16 February 1904.

instance of Britain's supposed lack of sympathy with Canadian interests, thus undermining hopes of implementing Chamberlain's federation plans.⁴²¹

Undoubtedly, 'North Atlantic Triangle' relations improved after Minto's departure, but it is unconvincing to suggest, as some Canadian historians do,⁴²² that he was to blame for the troubles. Continued rapprochement was aided by the resolution of the most dangerous outstanding difficulties, and as the remaining problems carried little threat of escalation, Britain even granted Canada increased control over its external affairs. Although the final settlement of involved, emotive and fractious difficulties like Alaska depended on people and circumstances beyond gubernatorial control, Minto had some influence in improving relations. Exercising his 'sound common-sense',⁴²³ Minto never allowed his dislike of America to interfere with his approach to an important aspect of British foreign policy. He worked hard to fulfil his gubernatorial role to ensure that Britain and Canada appreciated the reasons behind their respective decisions. Frequent attempts were made to encourage Laurier to drop his unrealistic demands and accept British proposals, but Minto was equally diligent in his efforts to protect Canada against unfair treatment. His pragmatic approach was not entirely successful, as he was unable to persuade his British superiors to explain the Alaska decision or challenge Canadian fears about their interests being sacrificed to secure American friendship, but it did assist in securing a settlement. Minto always appreciated the importance of improving Anglo-American relations, but his foremost concern remained defending imperial interests, and his letters to Durand provide an effective illustration of the difficulties he encountered in balancing competing obligations:

I need not say how thoroughly I agree with you, that whilst admiring the rising power and great qualities of the American nation...we must put the rights of our own people first.⁴²⁴

⁴²¹ *LMCP II*, Minto to Chamberlain, 14 December 1903, pp. 391-95.

⁴²² Sarty, 'Great Rapprochement', p. 34.

⁴²³ Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 156-76.

⁴²⁴ NLS MS 12559, Minto to Durand, 12 January 1904.

Minto, Morley and the local defence of India, 1905-1910

Historiographical interpretations of the Minto-Morley partnership have previously focused on the introduction of the famous reforms. Considerations of Indian defence are limited to the response to the emergence of nationalist terrorism with brief mentions of the disagreements over frontier and foreign policy. Morley's biographers, especially Wolpert, created an image of a Liberal Titan controlling the destiny of the largest and most important part of the Empire, able to apply his own political principles to its administration and overcoming the prejudices of tyrannical bureaucrats in Simla to fulfil his mission of setting India on the path to self-government. This is difficult to reconcile with the evidence. Many Indian nationalists and British radicals welcomed his appointment to the India Office, but were soon disappointed as Morley was not only unable to stop the repressive measures being implemented by Simla in a desperate effort to counter the waves of unrest sweeping the Raj, but often acquiesced in their introduction. His plans for conciliation and reform did little to achieve their ends. As the local British representative, more aware of the difficulties that arose and to which it was necessary to respond, Minto was often able to set the policy agenda in India.⁴²⁵

Morley's attitude to the Viceroy was summed up by his remark to Esher, who noted that he 'praised Minto as a *gentleman*. Not *clever*, but the highest type of the old governing class...'⁴²⁶ Morley apparently held Minto's qualities in high regard, lauding his devotion to duty and sense of responsibility, his shrewd and subtle vision, and his loyalty and courage.⁴²⁷ Differing conceptions of empire bred conflict, however, and his confidence in Minto decreased over his time in office, to the extent that he even sounded out Esher about succeeding to the Viceroyalty 1908,⁴²⁸ and he was forced to reprimand Minto privately over certain issues, notably the release of the deportees in 1910. Morley found it difficult to compel the Indian Government to carry out his orders in the spirit in which they were issued, and became depressed by their propensity to resort to severe measures. The Secretary of State used his control over appointments to inject new blood into the overly

⁴²⁵ Wolpert, *Morley and India*, passim; R. Holland, *The Pursuit of Greatness: Britain and the World Role, 1900-1970* (Fontana, London, 1991), pp. 42-43. As the attempts to respond to nationalist unrest are dealt with in extensive detail by several historians the focus here is on the neglected issue of Frontier defence as an illustration of the difficulties encountered by Minto.

⁴²⁶ Lord Esher's Journal, January 1908 in M.V. Brett (ed.), *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher Vol. II* (Nicolson & Watson, London, 1934).

⁴²⁷ J. Morley, *Recollections*, Vol. II (Macmillan, London, 1917), pp. 151-153; Buchan, *Lord Minto*, pp. 219-224.

⁴²⁸ *Journals and Letters*, Journal 28 October & 21 November 1908.

bureaucratic Indian Government, but these often only succeeded in provoking resentment, especially that of Fleetwood Wilson.⁴²⁹

Wolpert is unrealistic in his praise of Morley, ('few were his peers in their impact in Indian history'⁴³⁰), guilty of arguing as if Morley was exempt or at least aloof from Britain's imperial society because of his background, ignoring the fact that as Indian Secretary he was a central part of it.⁴³¹ His Cabinet colleagues, like Minto, admired his intellectual qualities, but found him difficult to work with: 'he is quite the most impossible colleague that ever entered a Cabinet.'⁴³² They doubted his ability to administer a large department, let alone a populous Empire, and most were happy to have him isolated from the rest of the Government to prevent his unwelcome interference in their business.⁴³³ Buchan argued that Minto regarded his superior as an exponent of principles and inspirer rather than a framer of policies.⁴³⁴

Minto undoubtedly appreciated the support offered by Morley, particularly the assistance in overcoming potential difficulties with the radical House of Commons: 'he has backed me up really well.'⁴³⁵ Their relationship was unexpectedly close despite their differing backgrounds and political philosophies, but this masked an occasionally bitter struggle behind the scenes over who should rule India, illustrating the tension that existed at the heart of Indian Government. Much of this arose from the differing priorities held by the Viceroy and Secretary of State, and it intensified whenever issues of defence were involved, as these were less to the liking of the latter. Inherent in this were the different tasks they faced; Morley had to take the 'policy' view inspired by the ideological background of the Liberal Government, Minto did not have this luxury, and although he did frequently consider the long-term future for India, more often his concern was a

⁴²⁹ Wolpert, *Morley and India*, pp. 41ff; Koss, *Morley at the India Office*, pp. 152ff, 173ff.

⁴³⁰ Wolpert, *Morley and India*, p. 5.

⁴³¹ Wolpert, *Morley and India*, passim. Koss, *Morley at the India Office* takes a more balanced view than Wolpert, who is guilty of regarding Morley as somewhat of a saint.

⁴³² NLS RB Haldane Papers, MS 5909, Asquith to Haldane, 9 September 1911; NLS Arthur Elliot Papers, MS 19477, Correspondence between Lord Minto and Arthur Elliot, 1909 to 1913, A. Elliot to Minto, 11 August 1910. According to Esher's *Journals*, 13 December 1905, Campbell Bannerman nicknamed Morley 'Priscilla.'

⁴³³ NLS R.B. Haldane Papers, MS 20063, R.B. Haldane Autobiography, Vol. I, pp. 149-156; G. Clarke, *My Working Life* (John Murray, London, 1927), p. 201; D.A. Hamer, *John Morley: Liberal Intellectual in Politics* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1968), pp. 345-52; Searle, *A New England?*, pp. 478-481.

⁴³⁴ Buchan, *Lord Minto*, p. 222.

⁴³⁵ NLS MS 12416, Minto to Lady Minto, 15 May 1907; Tinker, 'Power and Influence in Britain and India', p. 77.

pragmatic one, having to confront the dangers that could immediately arise in India. In this regard, the disputes engendered by differing approaches to relations with Afghanistan and the frontier tribes, or internal defence policies, are key to understanding a relationship at the centre of British imperial government.

Morley was criticised for his lack of knowledge about, and interest in, India. On his appointment, he was derided as 'wholly ignorant of India and her difficult problems.'⁴³⁶ Minto prevented the Indian secretary from visiting the Raj during his tenure. In this way he could maintain his one advantage as the only one in the partnership with practical first-hand experience of India. Frequent reminders that the 'man on the spot' was a better judge of the situation and that a distant politician was unable to appreciate the difficulties faced infuriated Morley.⁴³⁷ It did not help that Morley regarded the Raj as 'unnatural and artificial,' and believed that Britain's duty should be to assist it to a peaceful conclusion, rather than maintain it forever.⁴³⁸

Many regarded Morley as temperamentally unsuited to the post, and his interference with the everyday administration of India became unbearable. He was 'not unfairly described as the most autocratic Secretary of State that ever reigned in Whitehall.'⁴³⁹ Morley tried to control every aspect of policy, from appointments to frontier military strategy, in an effort to fundamentally alter the Indian Government as a way to achieve his aim of changing Britain's purpose in India. Wolpert argues that claims of his 'despotic treatment of the misunderstood and long-suffering Government of India' are a distortion.⁴⁴⁰ But others support the Indian complaint that his interference fatally undermined British prestige and authority in India. Particular criticism was reserved for interference by the radical House of Commons, which made the government of India even more difficult and led Minto to complain that they could not rule a turbulent country by 'namby-pamby sentimentalism.' As a Gladstonian radical, Morley found this especially difficult to stomach. Believing that Parliament should act as the final arbiter for Indian government, he often privately

⁴³⁶ Clarke, *My Working Life*, p. 189.

⁴³⁷ Clarke, *My Working Life*, p. 221-232; Lloyd, *British Empire*, pp. 267ff; P. Moon, *The British Conquest and Dominion of India* (Duckworth, London, 1989), p. 944.

⁴³⁸ Wolpert, *Morley and India*, passim.

⁴³⁹ Moon, *British Conquest and Dominion*, p. 944.

⁴⁴⁰ Wolpert, *Morley and India*, pp. 41ff. See also Koss, *Morley at the India Office*, pp. 152ff; Hamer, *Morley*, pp. 345-52; S. Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth, 1885-1929* (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1965), pp. 46-55.

supported many of the radicals' criticisms. Montagu's statement that the Viceroy was merely the Secretary of State's 'agent' in India provoked a storm of criticism, but it highlighted a belief that the Viceroy was a junior partner in the government of India.⁴⁴¹ Minto always resented such a suggestion, and summarised his frustrations to Clarke, who, although appointed by Morley, was also finding his constant criticism and interference hard to bear. The Viceroy argued that the system of administration from London was dangerous to India:

India cannot be administered from home – great principles may be enunciated by a Secretary of State, but he cannot direct the daily administration of India; if he attempts to do so, he can only hamper its Government, and I have always felt that, notwithstanding the many personal difficulties with which I have had to deal, and which should never have been inflicted on me, my duty was to sail the ship as best I could, notwithstanding the needless interference with which I had to reckon. But putting oneself aside, what really impresses me is the danger of it all.⁴⁴²

Clarke agreed with the Viceroy's argument that the Secretary of State could not rule India from Britain, but pointed out that because of parliamentary interference, he could make it very difficult for the men to fulfil their duties. Minto faced a difficult situation, and he faced severe criticism on his return home for allowing Britain to take over the governing of India and further damaging the prestige of the Viceroyalty. But his travails reflected a shift in Britain's attitude to its Empire as power became increasingly centralised in the metropolis to avoid overzealous pro-consuls damaging British interests:

Far-flung imperial possessions made centralised control impractical, yet no government could accept that questions of foreign policy...might be decided by the actions of low-ranking officers in distant lands.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Buchan, *Lord Minto*, pp. 209ff, 308ff; Das, *Minto and Morley*, 46-62; L. James, *Raj: The Making of British India* (Abacus, London, 1997), p. 418; A.P. Kaminsky, *The India Office, 1880-1910* (Mansell, London, 1986); Wasti, *Lord Minto*, pp. 9-26.

⁴⁴² NLS MS 12773, Minto to Clarke, 23 July & 9 August 1910, Clarke to Minto, 29 July 1910; MS 12403, Lord Minto's Miscellaneous Correspondence, January 1909 to December 1910, George V to Minto, 4 August 1910; MS 12477, A. Elliot to Minto, 22 September 1910; Clarke, *My Working Life*, pp. 221-233, 239-249.

⁴⁴³ P. Hayes, 'British Foreign Policy and the Influence of Empire, 1870-1914' *JICH* 12 (1984), p. 103; Tinker, 'Power and Influence', p. 76.

Minto found Morley very difficult to deal with. He was hypersensitive and vain – ‘almost feminine’ in his vanity according to Minto – and this increased the burden of his already heavy workload, although with the bonus in the Viceroy’s eyes of assisting in always gaining his point:

I really marvel how I have got on with him. He is the vainest of the vain, and I have written every letter to humour him with the turn of a phrase – but always insisting on what I thought right and I shall always do – but the trouble of framing every sentence in telegrams as well as letters so as not to wound his sensitivities and yet to get what one wants is untold.⁴⁴⁴

Undoubtedly a struggle occurred between Simla and Whitehall over how best to counter threats to India’s safety, but arguing over which side ‘won’ and whether Minto kept Morley in line with his conservative principles or Morley cajoled Minto into associating himself with moderate reforms is missing the point.⁴⁴⁵ Morley tried to ensure by his appointments to replace Minto and Kitchener that his legacy would continue, but he never succeeded in eradicating unrest in India, nor the local authorities’ harsh responses to it. Minto accepted that they could not always respond with force or repression whenever a threat arose, but supported the introduction of reforms from the outset. Porter makes the plausible argument that compromise between conciliation and repression drove them forward, well illustrated by their frontier policy, as both sides accepted, however reluctantly, the limitations of their respective positions.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁴ NLS MS 12417, Minto to Lady Minto, 9 April 1908.

⁴⁴⁵ Das, *Minto and Morley*, passim; Kaminsky, *The India Office*, passim; Searle, *A New England?*, p. 478; Wasti, *Lord Minto*, passim; Wolpert, *Morley and India*, passim.

⁴⁴⁶ Porter, *Lion’s Share*, pp. 218-226.

Afghanistan

Sandwiched between two rival Empires, Afghanistan occupied a key position in British strategic thinking. Whether viewed as a buffer against, or the likely theatre of operations in a war with, Russia, or as posing a threat to India's frontiers of its own accord, most Indian authorities agreed that remaining on good terms with the Amir was vital for Indian defence. Having worked hard to restore cross-border friendship, Minto was dismayed that the Liberal Government's foreign policy threatened to destroy his achievements.

As with much else during his Indian career, Minto's initial encounters with Habibullah were defined by the difficult legacy bestowed by Curzon.⁴⁴⁷ Minto's willingness to treat Afghanistan as an important ally, rather than a feudal vassal, enabled him to persuade the Amir to visit India, a task in which Curzon had signally failed. Most agreed with Roberts's assessment that it was 'impossible to overestimate the importance of the approaching visit.'⁴⁴⁸ It was decided, however, not to utilise the opportunity presented to discuss joint military arrangements. Instead the occasion was treated as an opportunity to cement goodwill, believed to be of more tangible benefit to India than the precise definition of military obligations.⁴⁴⁹ Minto remained convinced both about Habibullah's intentions and the benefits of a successful visit:

My belief is that he means studiously to avoid discussing affairs of state, no matter how trivial. I have no intention of introducing them unless the most palpable opportunity offers, and I believe that if he only departs with some real feelings of personal friendship towards me, we shall have made a step in advance which should be of the greatest use to us in respect of the various points affecting India and Afghanistan which we shall have to consider in the future.⁴⁵⁰

When Habibullah finally departed, Minto was optimistic about the results achieved, 'I am firmly convinced of the immense future value of the personal acquaintance he has made with many people here,'⁴⁵¹ and he must have wondered in more troubled times about the difficulties he would have faced had Habibullah not regarded him as a personal friend.

⁴⁴⁷ For Curzon's troubles with the Afghans see Brodrick, *Records and Reactions*, pp. 193-198; Dilks *Curzon in India Vol. II*, pp 51ff, 150-174; Edwardes, *High Noon*, pp. 183-188; Gilmour, *Curzon*, pp. 286-287. See also NLS MS 12750, Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Amir of Afghanistan, November 1905 to December 1907, Amir to Afghan Envoy to GOI, 15 March 1906

⁴⁴⁸ NLS MS 12776, Roberts to Minto, 27 December 1906, Roberts to Morley, 7 November 1906.

⁴⁴⁹ NLS MS 12736, Minto to Morley, 3 September & 18 November 1906, Morley to Minto, 2 & 9 November 1906; MS 12741, Minto to Morley, 11 & 21 December 1906, Morley to Minto, 14 December 1906.

⁴⁵⁰ NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 9 January 1907.

⁴⁵¹ NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 6 February 1907, Minto to Godley, 30 January 1907.

Much to Minto's chagrin, British negotiations with Russia threatened to undermine these achievements. To him Afghanistan posed a more immediate threat to India, and was therefore a 'more necessary friend.' Concerns about the potentially dangerous impact of this shift towards Russia on Indian security were frequently reiterated to Morley. Minto particularly emphasised the risks posed by failing to consult the Amir about agreements with Russia that affected Afghanistan:

If he in any way considers that we have entered into a bargain behind his back with his arch-enemy, I much doubt if we can ever expect again to exercise the influence we now undoubtedly possess over him.⁴⁵²

Britain risked losing a friendship of incalculable value for the defence of India to gain a 'phantom friendship' with a power still actively advancing its own interests. Others in India, like Dane, the Foreign Secretary, shared the Viceroy's misgivings, arguing that:

It will be lamentable if once again His Majesty's Government destroy our chances of making a satisfactory advance in the direction of settling the Afghan problem out of an undue regard for Russian susceptibilities.⁴⁵³

Different motivations prevented the establishment of any consensus. While India's policy focused on maintaining frontier security, Britain's focus had shifted to the potential benefits to be gained in Europe from a Russian agreement.⁴⁵⁴ Morley swiftly dismissed Simla's objections, facing Cabinet pressure to overcome expected Indian opposition and further the policy of reducing defence expenditure. Simla endeavoured to assist the negotiations, but could not easily discard entrenched suspicions. Minto continued to voice his concerns about the agreement, doubting it could achieve its stated aim of permanently guaranteeing tranquillity on the Indian frontier:

⁴⁵² NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 29 May 1907, Morley to Minto, 13 June 1907.

⁴⁵³ NLS MS 12766, Correspondence between the Viceroy and Persons in India, January to June 1907, Dane to Minto, 26 February 1907.

⁴⁵⁴ NLS MS 12736, Morley to Minto, 6 July 1906. For the negotiations see R.P. Churchill, *The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907* (Books for Libraries Press, Freeport, 1972), and Siegel, *Endgame*. Most works on Edwardian foreign policy cover the issue in some detail, for example, G. Monger, *The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy, 1900-1907* (Nelson, London, 1963).

Our friendship with the Amir as far as present circumstances are concerned is of much greater consequence to us than any agreement with Russia (I am only speaking of the North West Frontier) can possibly be.

India's anxiety was further heightened by the danger of Russian intrigue posed by local Russo-Afghan communications or commercial relations. Minto believed that insisting on Afghan acquiescence would damage relations, and argued that the only way to appease Habibullah sufficiently to persuade him to accept the Convention was by delaying its publication to provide an opportunity for the Viceroy to explain its advantages to Afghanistan. Minto found it difficult to disguise his fears: 'it will be a very serious matter if he does not view the Convention in a favourable light.'⁴⁵⁵ Morley appreciated India's concerns that the agreement would arouse the Amir's suspicions, but as the issue of respective influence in Afghanistan remained a potential stumbling block he was determined that this Oriental potentate would not derail the negotiations. Given its wider implications, Indian suggestions to drop the agreement completely could not be countenanced, and Simla was forcefully reminded of its duty to manage the Amir and prevent the proceedings collapsing ignominiously. Russian agreement that the Convention would only come into force if Habibullah consented, and to minimise their presence on the border to facilitate the process, provided some relief for Morley.⁴⁵⁶

Continued complaints about the potential damage to relations with Afghanistan or the opportunities provided for Russian intrigue achieved nothing.⁴⁵⁷ Signed on 31 August 1907, the Anglo-Russian Convention laudably aimed to maintain 'solid and lasting peace.' For Britain, arguably the most difficult part was over,⁴⁵⁸ for Minto and India's authorities the difficulties were about to multiply as they confronted the task of persuading the Amir to accept the agreement. Russia had agreed that Afghanistan was outside its sphere of influence while Britain promised not to alter Afghanistan's political status unless the Amir failed to fulfil his obligations, nor to use its influence in a hostile sense. Minto's belief that 'the soundness of the bargain, especially as to Afghanistan, is beyond criticism,' satisfied

⁴⁵⁵ NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 3 July 1907; MS 12742, Minto to Morley, 4 July 1907.

⁴⁵⁶ NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 18 July & 2 August 1907; MS 12742, Morley to Minto, 2, 15 & 23 August 1907.

⁴⁵⁷ NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 21 August 1907; NLS MS 12742, Minto to Morley, 20 August 1907.

⁴⁵⁸ Although Siegel, in *Endgame*, stresses that seven years of friction meant that by 1914 Anglo-Russian relations were on the verge of breaking point.

the Secretary of State, who remained confident that the matter could be resolved favourably providing the Amir 'did not kick up his heels.'⁴⁵⁹

Unfortunately this was exactly what he did. As both London and Simla recognised the importance of quickly obtaining the Amir's assent debate between the two governments focused on the best methods to achieve this, as the various strategies adopted failed miserably. Such centre-periphery disagreement illustrated their conflicting priorities, and the different perceptions of the two principal actors. Minto's aristocratic background, Canadian apprenticeship and Indian experience had made him more adept at handling people, and he was more aware than Morley that Habibullah could not be bullied into acceptance. However much he disagreed with the policy, Minto accepted that his Viceregal duty impelled him to assist in the implementation of London's initiatives, although he always took advantage of opportunities that arose to apply his local knowledge and make suggestions to Morley. Whitehall's determination to secure finalisation of the Convention to suit the needs of a Eurocentric policy clashed with the stubborn insistence of their Indian subordinates that Afghan friendship, the keystone of local defence, was endangered by British policy. The prospect of any innovative approach to the problem was stifled by these disputes, which merely served to heighten frontier tension.

In his initial approaches to the Amir, Minto followed Morley's suggestions to offer reassurances that the Convention secured Afghan independence and prevented any British or Russian interference with their political integrity. Russia had been granted the right to non-political communications to facilitate the agreement, but advice from Simla was readily available to prevent any difficulties. Appealing to Habibullah's vanity, Minto stated that his assent was necessary for this important international agreement, advantageous to their joint interests, to come into force.⁴⁶⁰ Early inquiries met with resolute silence, provoking further Anglo-Indian debate about the best course to pursue. Suggestions to despatch a British mission disturbed Morley, who, although anxious for a reply, wished to avoid further inflaming the already volatile situation on the frontier⁴⁶¹ or strengthening the already powerful anti-British 'fanatical' party at Kabul, which Habibullah was unable to

⁴⁵⁹ NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 4 September 1907, Morley to Minto, 26 September 1907.

⁴⁶⁰ NLS MS 12737, Morley to Minto, 19 September 1907; MS 12742, Morley to Minto, 31 August & 1 September 1907, Minto to Morley, 5 September 1907.

⁴⁶¹ NLS MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 22 January & 6 February 1908; NLS MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 25 January & 1 February 1908, Morley to Minto, 30 & 31 January 1908.

bypass. Criticising proposals to apply pressure on Afghanistan as likely to provoke outright rejection, Minto believed his friendship with the Amir could assist in overcoming such obstacles and that regardless of the opposition, Habibullah would agree to the Convention: 'I am still sanguine as to ultimate assent.'⁴⁶²

Morley's arguments became increasingly conflicted. While increasingly exasperated by the lack of progress:

What's the good of all your noble feasting of him – what's the good of his versatility and cleverness, if he is too lazy to use it effectually, and with good faith to his English friends,

and alarmed by the prospect that the Russian military would ignore the Convention he had worked hard to create if it was not accepted by the Amir, he had no wish to provoke a 'row,' and advised Minto to adopt a cautious policy.⁴⁶³ Such concerns proved prescient, as rumblings circulated during the tribal uprisings of early 1908 that India was 'face to face with possible hostilities with Afghanistan.' Minto wished to avoid creating this impression to prevent exacerbating existing tensions, and he believed that maintaining good relations was all-important, but he did approve surreptitious preparations while simultaneously appeasing Morley by dispelling the idea that war was probable. Morley favoured the continuation of friendly relations, and argued that 'irresponsible talk and war fever' did nothing to enhance the possibility of the Amir agreeing to the Convention, although he admitted that the issue had become a double-edged sword; the Amir would be called a coward if he complied, the British would be accused of being afraid if they failed to secure his assent.⁴⁶⁴

Further consideration of their options forced British officials into an unimaginative recourse to correspondence with Habibullah. Sending a British emissary was unjustifiably dangerous. Exaggerated courtesy risked being interpreted as weakness, but applying pressure would alienate the Amir and India could not rely on Afghan fear of its recently

⁴⁶² NLS MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 4, 19 & 23 March 1908.

⁴⁶³ NLS MS 12738 Morley to Minto 23 & 30 April 1908.

⁴⁶⁴ NLS MS 12738, Minto to Morley 30 April & 6 May 1908, Viceroy's Note for Council, 13 May 1908, Morley to Minto, 7 May 1908; MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 4 May 1908, Morley to Minto, 5 May 1908.

demonstrated military strength to discourage the provocation of war when reports had been received that jihad was being openly preached. Minto appreciated the Afghan objections to an agreement which apparently undermined their sovereignty, and he believed the importance of maintaining friendly relations with Afghanistan was axiomatic despite Habibullah's troublesome behaviour, and they could 'do nothing without risking his friendship, which I consider most necessary for the peace of India.' As the only viable option available it was decided to send another despatch to Afghanistan stressing the advantages of Britain reaching a permanent settlement with Russia, but Minto began to hint at the unthinkable; Afghan refusal to agree and being forced to inform Russia that while India accepted the articles relating to Afghanistan they could not be forced on the Amir without provoking war.⁴⁶⁵ This worst-case scenario was evidently something Morley did not wish to consider, and desperate to avoid any confrontation over the issue, he resolutely continued to advocate correspondence and gentle persuasion as the best way to persuade the Amir to adhere to the agreement.⁴⁶⁶

Edward VII, kept informed of all Indian affairs by Minto and used as an unofficial conduit to pressure Morley, summarised growing British frustration:

It is satisfactory to learn that the Amir has acted in a very friendly spirit towards you, but his brother Nasrulla is an objectionable and dangerous individual....However it is much to be regretted that the Amir has not yet agreed to the Anglo-Russian Convention, I almost look upon it at any rate as a snub, if not an offence to us. I suppose he is afraid of his own people and the effect it would have in his own country if he gave his assent.⁴⁶⁷

Minto continued writing to the Amir, appealing for a response and again offering assurances about the benefits Afghanistan could gain from adherence to the Convention, but he was 'not hopeful as to the result,' and warned London to consider its next steps in the inevitable event of a direct refusal.⁴⁶⁸ The situation became increasingly critical as Simla received warnings about Afghan opposition to the Convention based on fears of the

⁴⁶⁵ NLS MS 12768, Correspondence between the Viceroy and Persons in India, January to June 1908, Minto to McMahon, 23 May 1908; MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 13 & 21 May, 23 June & 1 July 1908; MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 3 July 1908

⁴⁶⁶ NLS MS 12738, Morley to Minto, 16 July 1908; MS 12743, Morley to Minto, 30 July 1908.

⁴⁶⁷ NLS MS 12728, Correspondence between the Viceroy and Edward VII, November 1905 to November 1910, Edward VII to Minto, 7 July 1908.

⁴⁶⁸ NLS MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 29 July 1908; MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 25 July 1908.

threat European interference posed to their continued independence, and rumours circulated about efforts by the 'fanatical' party to instigate uprisings among the tribes. Minto had no wish to provoke war, but he feared that they may yet be forced into hostilities, and he had little doubt where the blame for this lay or the problems it could entail:

It is important that they should know at home what their diplomacy has brought about...Personally I am inclined to think the outlook on the frontier is worse than we have yet had it, and I should doubt...that we could limit matters to a tribal war without actual war in the face of Nasrulla's machinations.⁴⁶⁹

References to 'armed pressure' bandied about in London and Simla did little to ease the tension. Morley admitted that continued Afghan frontier intrigues or refusal to accept the Convention raised the possibility of confrontation, but he reminded Minto of the need to rely on diplomatic methods, and of their duty to 'persuade our Barbarian friends that the Convention is for their own good.' With the Amir fully aware that he was no longer able to play Britain and Russia off against each other, this was easier said than done.⁴⁷⁰

Unable to pursue his preferred course of avoiding unnecessary interference with Afghanistan and thus avoiding the associated risks of undermining a friendly regime, Minto continued his patient efforts to work with the Amir, ever wary of the need to carefully handle 'Asiatic perplexities.' Attempts to reduce frontier tension accompanied repeated assurances that Britain's aim was to protect Afghanistan.⁴⁷¹ A reply was eventually received in September 1908. Although it voiced Afghan criticisms, both of the Convention, particularly the threat it posed to their independence, and of British willingness to discard Afghan friendship without compensating advantages, both Minto and Morley were not completely discouraged by Kabul's response. Simla's attempts to persuade London that the Amir would not consent to the Convention in its existing form had been met with swift and angry rebuttals emphasising that Whitehall would not even

⁴⁶⁹ NLS MS 12728, Minto to Edward VII, 20 August 1908; MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 5, 18 August & 2 September 1908, Morley to Minto, 26 August 1908; MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 17, 22 & 25 August 1908; MS 12769, Correspondence between the Viceroy and Persons in India, July to December 1908, Kitchener to Minto, 17 & 28 August 1908, Minto to Kitchener 17 & 28 August 1908.

⁴⁷⁰ NLS MS 12738, Morley to Minto, 26 August, 10 & 12 September 1908; NLS MS 12743, Morley to Minto, 29 August 1908.

⁴⁷¹ NLS MS 12769, Minto to Amir, 2 September 1908.

attempt to alter the treaty. Minto understood objections to the clauses threatening Afghan safety or damaging their interests, but Morley attributed this to Habibullah's removal from his old vantage point of being able to play the two great powers against each other, and argued that it was Minto's duty to emphasise the advantages they would accrue from adherence, notably the extra protection it offered from Russian interference.⁴⁷² Never believing it was in India's best interests to repeatedly press the point, Minto nevertheless accepted his Viceregal responsibility to continue his efforts to implement British policy. Peripheral crisis fatally undermined the chances for success, as domestic Afghan turmoil forced the Amir to turn to the 'fanatical' party in an effort to shore up his position, once again raising the spectre of frontier war among British officials, a conclusion with which Minto did not wholly agree:

I am far from saying a frontier war and complications with Afghanistan may not be forced on us some day, but I largely discount the assumption of so many of our frontier officers that things are going from bad to worse and that a war on the frontier is unavoidable and imminent.⁴⁷³

War never materialised, but Morley's efforts to persuade Habibullah to assent before he departed Whitehall came to naught, although he remained confident their aim would be achieved: 'I don't despair of his one day assenting to the Russian Convention.'⁴⁷⁴ It never happened, and by the time of the Amir's assassination in 1919, the treaty had long been overtaken by events.

The Convention heightened tension with Afghanistan over other issues, making them potentially explosive flashpoints. Disagreements over the handover point for trade caravans on the frontier reopened old wounds about undefined boundaries and jurisdictions, and provoked further arguments between Minto and Morley over the best methods of dealing with such problems. The Viceroy's insistence on remaining strong in the face of such provocation, fearing that any other course would be perceived as weakness

⁴⁷² NLS MS 12738, Morley to Minto, 24 September 1908; MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 21, 24, 25 & 29 September 1908, Morley to Minto, 29 September & 14 October 1908.

⁴⁷³ NLS MS 12739, Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, 1909, Minto to Morley, 17 & 24 March 1909; MS 12740, Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, 1910, Minto to Morley, 5 May 1910; MS 12770, Correspondence between the Viceroy and Persons in India, January to June 1909, McMahon to Minto, 1 June 1909.

⁴⁷⁴ NLS MS 12739, Morley to Minto, 31 August 1909.

on Britain's part, disturbed Morley, who constantly urged the need to respond diplomatically. While closing the Khyber Pass frequently assisted in defusing such problems, no long-term solution could be found. Tribal feuding at the other end of the frontier in the Kurram Valley proved equally problematic, even threatening to disturb Minto and Kitchener's usually harmonious relationship, and posing the danger of provoking a wider conflagration.⁴⁷⁵ Local tensions over the Tor Kham and Kurram boundaries indicated the worrying lack of control the Amir exercised over his own officials and population. Wider fears that the Convention endangered Afghan independence made them unnecessarily difficult to resolve.

Forced to accept a policy it did not support, objections to which were brusquely silenced, India suffered the opprobrium for failing to secure the Amir's assent, becoming an unwilling victim of its own success in repairing damaged relations with Afghanistan. The centre-periphery tension inherent in imperial government was amply illustrated, and exacerbated by the conflicting outlooks of the two figures at its apex. Morley, infuriated by the parochial outlook of the Indian authorities, always stressed that improving relations with Russia would enhance India's security. Obtaining Habibullah's assent was vital to formalising that relationship. He was rarely convinced by Minto's arguments that Afghan opinion paid little attention to the wider European considerations involved, and frequently annoyed by the heavy-handed Indian approach, which, in his view, was the root cause of war scares. Minto did his best to implement the wishes of superiors, but was as successful in obtaining Afghan adherence as he was in persuading London that their policy was the cause of cross-border tension or that British prestige was dependent on firmness. That war was averted owed much to his earlier success in cultivating the Amir's friendship, but, paradoxically, it did much to undermine the chances of successfully concluding the Convention.

⁴⁷⁵ NLS MS 12770, Kitchener to Minto, 2 June 1909, Note by the Viceroy on the Kharlachi Incident, 7 June 1909.

The Frontier Tribes

Curzon's reorganisation of local government institutions and military deployment on the frontier had not achieved its stated aim of curtailing tribal lawlessness. It was recognised that although laudable, such hopes were utopian. By removing the intervening authority of the Punjab and making the Viceroy directly responsible for the most unpredictable and strategically vital aspect of Indian foreign policy, it should, theoretically, have made the authorities able to respond more rapidly to any outbreaks. In reality, it failed to consider the likely reaction of superiors in London anxious above all to preserve peace in any region that threatened to complicate relations with Russia. Frontier defence frequently embittered relations between London and Simla. India could not tolerate mayhem on its frontiers, and believed that any failure to react adequately would be perceived as weakness by the tribes, therefore provoking further outbreaks. Strength was vital, and 'hammering' the tribes as soon as trouble erupted was believed to be the best response; British dithering endangered the safety of the Raj. London could never agree, fearing that military intervention would merely encourage resistance and entail ruinous expenditure for little benefit, while bemoaning that India's aggression posed a threat to wider imperial interests and distracted attention away from reforms. As a result frontier policy debates came to epitomise the struggle between an aristocratic periphery and the Liberal centre.

Escalating Zakka Khel lawlessness after January 1907 in a strategically crucial area provoked a lengthy debate about possible responses and endless bickering over the policy to be adopted in the aftermath of any expedition.⁴⁷⁶ Indecision merely allowed the situation to deteriorate alarmingly when a swift operation could have prevented further problems. Continually emphasising to Morley the dangers posed by the Zakkas' conduct, Minto hoped to persuade the Secretary of State not only to launch an expedition, but to allow the establishment of a permanent military presence. Backed by Kitchener, the Viceroy was confident he could succeed:

I think it quite possible from the tone of Mr Morley's last letter to me that he might agree to our going into the Zakka Khel country, and staying there, that is, occupying such posts permanently as we thought necessary. He does not mention this particular case, but there are indications of a new view of frontier policy.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁶ NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 2 January 1907.

⁴⁷⁷ NLS MS 12766, Minto to Kitchener, 19 February 1907.

On what he based his optimism is not clear. Morley was a fervent critic of anything resembling a 'forward policy' and only reluctantly sanctioned any military policy.

Minto and Kitchener adopted a multi-pronged attack in their efforts to convince Morley; little worked. Attempts to persuade him that the 'man on the spot' was a better judge of the situation than advisers in Britain merely succeeded in arousing his ire, with its implied criticism that he neither understood nor appreciated the dangers faced in India.⁴⁷⁸ Alarming reports of the extent of tribal lawlessness were repeatedly fired at Morley. Well-armed tribesmen were raiding villages and attacking government positions along the frontier, and apparent British unwillingness to react made them increasingly audacious.⁴⁷⁹ Fearing that the trouble would spread to other tribes if left unchecked, Minto, Kitchener and Deane argued that an expedition had become inevitable to immediately vindicate Government authority, especially when local forces were appealing for assistance.⁴⁸⁰ Although lamenting the failure of the Zakka Khels to behave more sensibly, Morley was unimpressed, and criticised the Indian Government for their inefficiency in allowing tribesmen to successfully attack a major city like Peshawar.⁴⁸¹

India laid emphasis upon its eagerness to avoid an expedition fought along traditional lines of 'raid and scuttle.' Similar tactics in this instance would be a counter-productive waste of money. Destruction of tribal territory and inflicting heavy casualties would inflame resentment and breed a desire for revenge, while hasty withdrawal following operations, especially if under fire, would not impress any lesson on the tribes but instead would merely create dangerous perceptions of British weakness and provoke further attacks. Permanent settlement and possession of military posts in the country following operations would save future expense.⁴⁸² It was hoped that promises of reduced expenditure would induce Morley to accept a more aggressive frontier policy, but this optimism was

⁴⁷⁸ NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 6, 18 February & 5 March 1907.

⁴⁷⁹ NLS MS 12742, Minto to Morley, 31 October, 25 & 30 November 1907, 11 December 1907.

⁴⁸⁰ NLS MS 12767, Minto to Deane, 7 & 11 December 1907, Kitchener to Minto, 15 December 1907; MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 31 January 1908.

⁴⁸¹ NLS MS 12737, Morley to Minto, 14 March 1907; MS 12742, Morley to Minto, 10 April 1907; MS 12738, Morley to Minto, 19 February 1908; MS 12743, Morley to Minto, 31 January 1908 (x2).

⁴⁸² NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 6 & 18 February, 5 March, 2 & 10 April 1907; MS 12742, Minto to Morley, 24 March, 16 April & 22 April 1907.

misplaced. Morley greatly desired reductions in over-inflated military spending, but did not believe the claims the Indian authorities were making for their policy, particularly as they failed to provide any supporting evidence. Occupation of tribal territory only risked exacerbating tribal anger, thus increasing the danger of having to launch larger-scale operations, possibly involving Afghanistan. Staying aloof from incurring expensive new responsibilities or any 'Curzonian' trend in Indian foreign policy unacceptable to a radically inclined House was more important than reducing expenditure. Any such proposals were regarded as a reversal of the 1898 policy and could not be adopted.⁴⁸³

When tribal lawlessness finally exhausted Simla's patience, their demands for immediate action, regardless of any subsequent measures, could no longer be ignored. Morley's initial suggestion, for a blockade of the tribal territory as had been used against the Mahsuds in 1901-2, only succeeded in infuriating the Government of India, providing ample proof of Whitehall's ignorance of both Indian geography and the difficulties Curzon's blockade had caused.⁴⁸⁴ Approval for an expedition under strict limits was finally granted in February 1908, nearly a year after Simla had first voiced its concerns. As punishment of offenders was the object no annexation or occupation was permitted, nor would it be under any circumstances by the Liberal Government, a fact that India had to accept without complaint. Morley relied on Minto to ensure that the military and political authorities obeyed their instructions, and to prevent zeal overriding policy.⁴⁸⁵

Voicing concerns about declining local confidence in Britain's ability to 'afford them proper protection' Deane complained bitterly that failure to occupy territory would only encourage resistance and render the expedition ineffective.⁴⁸⁶ Minto and Simla undoubtedly shared these views, and appreciated the difficulties London's instructions had imposed, but aware of the futility of continued protests to Morley they reminded frontier officials that the policy had to be followed:

⁴⁸³ NLS MS 12737, Morley to Minto, 14 March 1907; MS 12742, Morley to Minto, 10 April 1907; MS 12738, Morley to Minto, 19 February 1908; MS 12743, Morley to Minto, 31 January 1908 (x2); Wolpert, *Morley and India*, pp. 88-90.

⁴⁸⁴ NLS MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 1 February 1908.

⁴⁸⁵ NLS MS 12743, Morley to Minto, 2, 3 & 6 February 1908, Minto to Morley, 4, 9 & 11 February 1908; MS 12768, Minto to Kitchener, 4 & 8 February 1908.

⁴⁸⁶ NLS MS 12650, Zakka Khel Expedition, 1908, Deane to Foreign Secretary, 4 February 1908; MS 12768, Deane to Minto, 5 February 1908.

You will, I am sure, have suspected how much instructions have influenced the plan of campaign! And the quicker you can go in and come out again the better will His Majesty's Government be pleased. Personally I doubt the permanent efficacy of punitive expeditions unless we are permitted to reap the benefits of them by increased control. However we must do the best we can.⁴⁸⁷

India made great efforts to ensure the expedition's success. As instructed, Minto wrote to the Amir offering reassurances that the operations aimed only at punishing criminal tribes rather than altering tribal administration,⁴⁸⁸ while Deane made efforts to ensure that the Afridis, widely regarded as the most dangerous tribe, would not interfere.⁴⁸⁹ In military terms it was decided that two brigades, with one in support, a strong enough force to overcome the Zakkas' 6000 fighting men and prevent the spread of opposition, would blockade the valley before moving in to destroy the offending villages, confiscate weapons, impose fines and capture prisoners.⁴⁹⁰ Willcocks, commanding the force, was reminded that the expedition's object was limited to punishment, and that while he and the Political Agent were vested with responsibility to agree terms with the tribe, 'neither immediately nor ultimately, directly, or indirectly will there be occupation or annexation of tribal territory.'⁴⁹¹ Accepting these restrictions on his freedom of action, Willcocks nevertheless promised to obey Minto's command to 'make [himself] as disagreeable as possible in the Bazar valley.'⁴⁹²

Despite Morley's failure to accede with Minto's request to keep the operations out of the public gaze, this had little effect on their progress. Indeed the expedition proved somewhat anti-climactic after the year of bickering that preceded it. Doubts prevalent amongst the political authorities about the potential success of the expedition on the lines it was being conducted were quickly dispelled by Willcocks's efforts against the tribe. Flying columns destroyed fortified strong-points and inflicted heavy casualties, quickly disheartening the tribe and making them anxious for a settlement. Willcocks argued that this opportunity should not be wasted, as the Zakka Khels 'would be willing to make almost any sacrifices to retain their independence....and they are in a mood to make a really binding agreement,'

⁴⁸⁷ NLS MS 12768, Minto to Willcocks, 9 February 1908, Minto to Deane, 9 February 1908, see also MS 12650, Foreign Secretary to Deane, 5 February 1908.

⁴⁸⁸ NLS MS 12768, Minto to Amir, 9 February 1908.

⁴⁸⁹ NLS MS 12650, Deane to Foreign Secretary, 12 February 1908, Khyber Political Agent to Foreign Secretary, 13 February 1908.

⁴⁹⁰ NLS MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 6 & 19 February 1908; NLS MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 4 February (x2), 5, 6 & 7 February 1908.

⁴⁹¹ NLS MS 12650, Foreign Secretary to GOC Zakka Khel Field Force, 12 February 1908.

⁴⁹² NLS MS 12768, Minto to Willcocks, 9 February 1908, Willcocks to Minto, 12 February 1908.

although it would be necessary to retain troops in the area temporarily to achieve this.⁴⁹³ The continued military presence served its purpose. The Afridi jirga quickly agreed a settlement in which they accepted responsibility for the future good behaviour of the Zakka Khels, secured by the handing over of rifles and Rs. 20,000, to be returned when the Government was satisfied that they had been punished.⁴⁹⁴

The rapid achievement of both the military and political goals outlined for the expedition delighted the Indian authorities, as Minto wrote:

I am quite pleased with the result of the expedition – all the more so, as it has been worked with your Brigade and Divisional machinery. The final arrangement appears excellent, and if the Afridis can fulfil their pledged to keep the Zakka Khels in order, we have made a good bargain. Mr Morley ought certainly to be well pleased – nothing could have been better done.⁴⁹⁵

All involved echoed these sentiments, pleased that the efficiency of the troops proved a marked contrast with that demonstrated in 1897. Pleased that frontier wars under his tutelage lasted two weeks and cost only £56,000, Morley's efforts to claim credit for the success and gloating that the results merely vindicated the policy imposed by the imperial government, as opposed to that favoured by India, proved the only annoyance.⁴⁹⁶

Hopes for a prolonged 'period of peace and rest from these troublesome raids'⁴⁹⁷ were quickly dashed as the arrival of large Afghan and tribal forces in the region to support their co-religionists confronted the Indian authorities with another frontier crisis. This demonstrated the importance of adopting a pragmatic approach. Dangerous situations requiring immediate response could always arise, preventing any detailed discussions of the minutiae of prospective policies between Simla and London. The Mohmand expedition presented Minto's government with a different set of challenges, as they faced

⁴⁹³ NLS MS 12768, Willcocks to Minto, 19 February 1908, Willcocks to Kitchener, 19 February 1908; MS 12650, Willcocks to Kitchener, 20 & 23 February 1908.

⁴⁹⁴ NLS MS 12768, Willcocks to Minto, 25 (x2), 26, 27, 29 February & 1 March 1908.

⁴⁹⁵ NLS MS 12768, Minto to Kitchener, 1 March 1908. See also NLS MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 23 March 1908.

⁴⁹⁶ NLS MS 12738, Morley to Minto, 4 March 1908; Wolpert, *Morley and India*, pp. 88-90; Koss, *Morley at the India Office*, pp. 111-120.

⁴⁹⁷ NLS MS 12768, Willcocks to Minto, 9 March 1908, Deane to Minto, 5 March 1908; T. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1998), p. 92.

simultaneous attacks on different parts of the frontier, which threatened to escalate into full-scale hostilities with Afghanistan. Mohmand raids and the presence of the Afghan lashkar had prompted the Indian authorities to strengthen defences on the frontier. A standoff resulted as Willcocks's forces adopted defensive positions to prevent any tribal attack, while the tribes launched raids to provoke a British response. Some concern was voiced about the danger of not responding to such hostility, but having been warned by Morley to adhere to London's frontier policy, Minto and Kitchener were content to maintain the defensive stand to avoid bringing a 'large lashkar about our ears' thus entailing a 'serious expedition'.⁴⁹⁸

To stabilise relations with Afghanistan and prevent further deterioration of the border situation, Minto explained to Habibullah why military measures had been taken and asked the Amir to prevent any further violations of British territory.⁴⁹⁹ At the end of April 1908 Willcocks's forces were able to drive the lashkars away from the border, but attempts to impose a settlement at this stage through the jirga fell flat as the tribes responded in offensive terms to government requests to submit. The subsequent lull enabled India's military authorities to undertake measures to defend the strategically vital Landi Kotal fort in the Khyber from attack by another Afghan lashkar. Despite concerns about the weakness of the force available and the impact of fighting on the Afridis, the attacks were poorly directed, and unable to muster local tribal support, the lashkars were easily driven off. Securing the Khyber Pass, and thus Peshawar, against further threat enabled the Indian authorities to turn their attention to punishing the Mohmands after Morley sanctioned the launching of a further punitive expedition. After offering reassurance about the purpose of the expedition, Minto, recognising the importance of ensuring Afghan friendship during negotiations about the Convention, was again able to obtain assistance from the Amir in protecting the border.

Although annoyed at having again to undertake a further expedition under Morley's instructions, which were widely derided among Indian authorities as self-defeating, Kitchener and Minto nevertheless urged Willcocks to repeat his earlier successes in inflicting suitable punishment on the worst offenders. The operations against the

⁴⁹⁸ NLS MS 12743, Morley to Minto, 22 April 1908; MS 12651, Deane to Dunlop Smith, 22 April 1908; MS 12768, Minto to Kitchener, 21(x2) & 22 April 1908; NLS MS 12651, Kitchener to Minto, 21 April 1908.

⁴⁹⁹ NLS MS 12768, Minto to Roos-Keppel, 23 April 1908.

Mohmands followed a similar pattern to those against the Zakka Khels. Even those sections that had only indirectly assisted the lashkars, by providing food or failing to inform the government of their advance were punished by the destruction of towers and villages, although crops were left untouched. Willcocks had been granted power to arrange terms with each section, and while some submitted willingly, others proved more recalcitrant. The fighting was heavier as frequent attacks on the camp were repulsed, while one larger-scale engagement was fought at Ambahar, where on 24 May 1908, Willcocks's skilful use of flanking tactics and mountain artillery inflicted heavy losses on the tribesmen. Operations continued until all the sections, including the notorious Baezais, instigators of much of the recent trouble, had been appropriately punished and a settlement had been reached. Although this left the government optimistic that future difficulties could be contained within the tribe, it did not deter them from taking extra security measures in the region, leaving small garrisons at strategic points on that part of the administrative frontier.⁵⁰⁰

Pleased with the results of this latest expedition against recalcitrant tribes, Minto proudly informed Edward VII of the further success,⁵⁰¹ and expressed his thanks to the Amir for restraining his tribes.⁵⁰² 'Willcocks' Weekend Wars' had successfully stabilised the frontier after six months of unrest, although the assistance of the loyal tribes in preventing a dangerous escalation was gratefully acknowledged. The records of the military operations, which involved intense fighting despite the small numbers of troops, contradict Siegel's claims that the Indian authorities owed their success to the tribes' departure to tend their crops. This misapprehension arises from her reliance on Foreign Office correspondence, much of which was written to reassure Russia that the writ of British authority still ran in the region in an effort to counter any concerns about the working of the recently concluded Convention. Kitchener and Willcocks would have been thoroughly displeased by such assertions. Much emphasis was laid upon the demonstration that the Indian Army's performance against the tribes had offered of the improvements in training and organisation for frontier warfare implemented since the disastrous performance in the

⁵⁰⁰ For correspondence relating to the Mohmand expedition and the defence of the Khyber, see NLS MS 12651, the Minto-Morley telegraphic correspondence for May 1908 in MS 12743, Minto's correspondence with his officials in India in MS 12768, and the summary of frontier policy in MS 12644. For accounts by two officers involved in the operations, see Lord Ismay, *Memoirs* (Heinemann, London, 1960), pp. 6-15 or W.R. Birdwood, *Khaki & Gown: An Autobiography* (Ward, Lock & Co., London, 1941), pp. 182-190.

⁵⁰¹ NLS MS 12728, Minto to Edward VII, 18 June 1908.

⁵⁰² NLS MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 3 June 1908, Minto to Morley, 8 June 1908 (2 telegrams); NLS MS 12768, Minto to Amir, 2 June 1908, Amir to Minto, 21 June 1908.

Tirah campaign. Rotating all the army's units to expose them to conditions on the frontier as their most likely theatre of operations had proved very successful, while the effective use of mountain artillery had obviated fears about the dangers posed by the increased numbers of modern rifles in tribal hands. British casualties were very low, while tribal losses had been on an unprecedented scale. While a high level of preparedness to deal with any potential frontier difficulties was maintained, concerns remained about the difficulties involved in overcoming a widespread rising.⁵⁰³

In political terms, both sides could claim a measure of vindication from recent events. Morley argued that the restraint he had imposed on the conduct of punitive expeditions had successfully inflicted punishment on wrong-doers while preventing any escalation into a general rising or Afghan war. Minto and Kitchener could have argued that it was only British dithering that had put them into this dangerous position in the first place. The success of Willcocks' operations against the Mohmands and Afghan lashkars, launched quickly in response to an immediate threat to Indian security had proved the validity of their strategy. Sufficient explanation to the neighbouring tribes of the reasons for launching such operations had ensured their continuing loyalty, and they must have wondered why the imperial government remained reluctant to authorise further expeditions. But India recognised the dangers attendant on such measures, providing an opportunity for radical mullahs to preach jihad by highlighting the apparent threat to tribal independence. Large-scale warfare would have been a very difficult proposition.

Attention in the latter stages of Minto's Viceroyalty shifted eastwards to unrest in the North East as China attempted to assert its claims in Tibet and Burma. Tension on the frontier had been reduced by the success of the operations, but lawlessness could not be completely eliminated, as the problems with the Mahsuds demonstrated. Minto and Kitchener continued to advocate their solution of increasing British control in the frontier region, without which 'there can be no permanent peace.' Gradual extension of British authority would have removed any danger of an Afridi war and Minto believed that 'we can quietly get the control by degrees if we were only allowed to.'⁵⁰⁴ Minto had come to accept, however, that further attempts to persuade Morley to accept such a policy were futile. This did not preclude frequent reminders of the dangers that existed in the region

⁵⁰³ Siegel, *Endgame*, pp. 34-38; Moreman, *Frontier Warfare*, pp. 89-93

⁵⁰⁴ NLS MS 12776, Minto to Roberts, 1 June 1908.

and the need to protect British subjects and officials. As taking over tribal territory or leaving the tribes to their own devices were not viable options, it was decided to encourage closer contact through the personal influence of the Political Officers while utilising the irregular forces to enhance tribal responsibility for the maintenance of order. Raids continued, but these became an accepted part of frontier life for the British unless they were willing to accept the ruinous expenditure and responsibilities entailed with complete elimination of tribal crime. Despite this, little doubt existed that Minto left behind a more stable situation on the frontier than had been bequeathed to him by Curzon, assisted by measures like the decision to retain garrisons on the Mohmand frontier after the expedition where the mere presence of regular troops deterred raiders. Disregarding the potential of the frontier to explode unexpectedly was foolhardy in the extreme, but thanks to the policy adopted during Minto's tenure, an amalgamation of his and Morley's ideas, Hardinge could afford to give it less attention than many of his predecessors, and remained one of the few Viceroys who was fortunate enough not to have to sanction an expedition into India's wild borderlands.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁵ NLS MS 12638, Misc. Foreign Dept Papers, 'Note by H Butler for successor at Government of India Foreign Dept.' pp. 114-118.

The Arms Traffic

While able to contain frontier lawlessness to the extent allowed by Liberal policy, Minto was concerned that the Gulf arms trade posed a major threat to India's security. Constant urging to London to take more effective measures to interrupt the traffic produced significant results in this instance, but Minto was never able to completely convince his superiors, concerned with the international implications of any direct steps to interdict gun-running, that military action rather than diplomacy was the only viable option.

Minto illustrated his concerns by describing to Morley the scene he encountered while visiting the frontier in 1910:

What impressed me most is the complete change in the personal armament of the tribesmen. In the old days it consisted of flintlocks, matchlocks, shields and long knives; now breech-loading rifles are universal. Notwithstanding the many reports I have seen on the subject I had no idea that the tribesmen had become so universally possessed of them. At a jirga which met me in the Kohat Pass in the tribal territory, there must have been several hundred rifles among the men surrounding me, every rifle loaded and full-cock, and their owners heavily laden with ammunition. The whole atmosphere full of stories of raids, counter-raids, blood-feuds, and the gallantry of our frontier officers. One cannot shut one's eyes to the seriousness of the position. The conditions we should have to face now in a big frontier war...would be entirely different to those of past years...⁵⁰⁶

First-hand experience of this alarming situation enabled the Viceroy to understand the anxiety of local officials about the dangers posed by vastly improved tribal armament. Possession of better weaponry by a volatile and warlike population merely multiplied the problems facing the Indian Government. Rifles were particularly suited to guerrilla warfare in the frontier hills, allowing a change in tribal tactics as close-quarter attacks with swords were replaced by long-range sniping into camps or forts from impregnable mountain sangars. The influx of rifles had serious implications for India's defence, enabling the tribes to better resist military encroachment.

Weapons in tribal hands could not be recovered, but improved security in cantonments and arms factories had reduced the traffic in stolen rifles and components. Success here, however, was soon overwhelmed by the scale of the Gulf trade, which dramatically

⁵⁰⁶ NLS MS 12740, Minto to Morley, 14 April 1910.

increased the number of rifles available to the tribes. Given impetus by the accomplishments of the 1890 Brussels Act in checking the African trade, the Gulf trade was barely affected by measures introduced by the Persian and Muscat authorities to prevent importation of arms into their territory. British naval patrols, granted rights to search vessels and remove contraband, had been able to seize 13,000 rifles and 2 million rounds of ammunition between December 1897 and March 1898, but their efforts were completely undermined by the arrival of French merchants, whose dhows were exempt from restrictions. Arms trafficking expanded enormously; an estimated 70,000 rifles had been imported into Muscat by 1905, and the value had increased even further within two years of Minto's appointment.⁵⁰⁷

Despite his concerns about the growing trade, and the inability of existing measures to prevent rifles reaching the tribes via Persia, Minto accepted assurances from London that negotiations to reach an international agreement would provide a more permanent solution for controlling the traffic than strengthening naval patrols or occupying areas of the coast.⁵⁰⁸ Morley and Grey trusted the forthcoming Brussels Arms Conference would provide this solution, and were unwilling to authorise any measures, such as the use of troops in Persian territory, liable to jeopardise negotiations with Russia or damage cordial relations with France, which proved to be a stumbling block throughout. Interception was to be left to the Persian authorities; India was limited to collecting information to support any recommendations arising from Brussels.⁵⁰⁹ Minto, mindful of the difficulties caused by the Anglo-Russian Convention, did not take so sanguine a view of the efficacy of diplomacy as a solution. Taking effective measures to arrest the traffic would persuade the Sultan and the other Great Powers, especially France, to agree to prohibition at Muscat. Instituting international control would assist, but Britain had to maintain paramount influence.⁵¹⁰ Minto's pessimism about the prospects for a satisfactory diplomatic agreement proved well grounded. France paid little heed to the Entente in a sphere where they could gain little. Attempts to reach agreement eventually collapsed as Lowe and Dockrill argue:

⁵⁰⁷ NLS MS 12676, pp. 38-39. See also R.M. Burrell, 'Arms and Afghans in Makran: An Episode in Anglo-Persian Relations, 1905-1912' *BSOAS* 49 (1986), pp. 8-24, and B.C. Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894-1914* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1967), pp. 270-88; T. Moreman, 'The Arms trade and the North-West Frontier Pathan Tribes, 1890-1914' *JICH* 22 (1994), pp. 187-211.

⁵⁰⁸ NLS MS 12741, Minto to Morley, 7 April & 22 June 1906.

⁵⁰⁹ NLS MS 12742, Morley to Minto, 27 May 1907; NLS MS 12676; Moreman, 'Arms Trade', pp. 187-211

⁵¹⁰ NLS MS 12742, Minto to Morley, 18 December 1907; NLS MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 2 February 1908.

The British were also angry with the French for refusing to terminate their right to trade arms in Muscat....unless the British would cede the Gambia, a suggestion which the Cabinet rejected in 1909.⁵¹¹

Without a suitable quid pro quo France refused to shift their position, despite Bertie's protests that it should have been unnecessary to provide compensation to stop them enabling wild tribes to kill France's supposed allies.⁵¹²

Indian intelligence-gathering activities and arms seizures merely served to emphasise the scale of the difficulties the authorities encountered and prompted apprehension about the dangers to India's security while diplomatic negotiations dragged on. Information received that up to 94,000 Martini-Henrys were in tribal hands punctured the optimism expressed by local officials in the Gulf in early 1907 that 'the Arms traffic is at a standstill.'⁵¹³ The capture of an Afghan arms caravan in the Kacha Gorge in October 1907 further strained relations with the Amir, whose vociferous complaints were dismissed by forceful reminders that India could not acquiesce in armed violations of its territory, and that the trade was illegal. As India provided facilities for Habibullah to import arms, it could not 'consent to the unrestricted illegal import of weapons by irresponsible persons,' nor allow him to make a grievance out of a legitimate action carried out within British jurisdiction. Minto argued that dealing with the issue firmly illustrated the attitude of Indian authorities on what it believed to constitute a serious danger.⁵¹⁴

Events in the Gulf lent weight to Simla's arguments in favour of more direct action. British warships continued to intercept gun-runners, for example HMS *Prosperine*, which captured a dhow carrying 1500 rifles in April 1908, but these measures were having worrying consequences. Large groups of Afghans had collected in the Mekran to prevent the capture of arms caravans and launch attacks on British telegraph stations. Anxiety heightened after an exchange of fire between *Prosperine* and some Afghans resulted in the death of a sailor.

⁵¹¹ Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, pp. 38-39; Busch, *Persian Gulf*, pp. 270-88.

⁵¹² NLS MS 12743, Morley to Minto, 28 July 1908; NLS MS 12739, Morley to Minto, 17 September 1908, 14 October 1908.

⁵¹³ NLS MS 12776, Poe to Minto, 13 February 1907.

⁵¹⁴ NLS MS 12742, Minto to Morley, 22, 27 September & 16 October 1907.

In response the telegraph stations were reinforced, but even Morley was concerned that such measures did not go far enough.⁵¹⁵ Simla argued that pressure needed to be exerted on Persia to make adequate arrangements to intercept caravans and prevent such large quantities of weapons reaching the frontier. Minto connected the influx of weapons, stating that in May and June 1908 alone 12,500 rifles and 2 million rounds of ammunition had passed through Persia, with unrest on the frontier in an effort to persuade the ever reluctant Morley that action to interdict the traffic was imperative:

There can be no doubt that the large influx of rifles from the Gulf during the gun-running season of 1908-9 into the Afghan districts of Khost and Ningrahar is in great measure responsible for the disordered condition obtaining in these districts generally, and in particular for the continuous raiding carried out from Khost, a district that has now become the chief rallying point for outlaws from our side of the border.⁵¹⁶

Anxieties arose among British officials that uncertainty over the on-going Brussels negotiations was encouraging greater exertions from gun-runners fearing the imposition of restrictions. Minto battled hard to overcome the unrealistic ideas about the scale of the problem facing India put forward by Morley and the officials he had foisted upon the beleaguered Viceroy. Under pressure from local officers arguing that little could be achieved against the traffickers with the limited resources at their disposal, Minto, although aware of the financial and political objections to naval activity in the Gulf or use of troops in Persia, advocated to Morley their suggestions to establish an effective naval blockade and military cordon along the Mekran. Continued inaction would be taken as a sign of British weakness and merely encourage the trade, but enhanced naval activity and reinforcing telegraph stations could increase the risks faced by the traffickers and disrupt their efforts.⁵¹⁷ Minto angrily dismissed Creagh's claims that the tribes had 'very few modern arms' and that reports about 'the arming of the tribes are exaggerated' by reminding him that there was 'ample evidence of the enormous increase' in the number of rifles.⁵¹⁸ Morley's insistence that Simla should stop getting 'over-excited' about the arms traffic⁵¹⁹ merely provided the outraged Viceroy with further evidence that London did not understand the complications it was already causing on the frontier. Well-armed tribes

⁵¹⁵ NLS MS 12743, Morley to Minto, 29 April 1908.

⁵¹⁶ NLS MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 22 March, 22 April & 10 November 1908; MS 12676, pp. 37-41, 53.

⁵¹⁷ NLS MS 12744, Minto to Morley, 6 January 1909.

⁵¹⁸ NLS MS 12771, Correspondence between the Viceroy and Persons in India, July to December 1909, Creagh to Minto, 30 November & 2 December 1909, Minto to Creagh, 7 December 1909.

⁵¹⁹ NLS MS 12739, Morley to Minto, 17 September 1909.

were already launching ever more audacious attacks on British positions, and it was feared that the huge numbers of rifles reaching them would encourage large-scale insurrection. As no assistance could be expected from the Sultan or the Persian Government, immediate and effective action had to be taken by Britain.⁵²⁰

To Minto's disappointment Morley only approved continuation of current naval operations and a temporary retention of troops at Robat.⁵²¹ Slade, the new naval commander in the Gulf, proved a valuable ally for Minto. Slade recommended to the Admiralty the adoption of a blockade for a year, supplemented by intelligence and military operations, to interdict the trade, arguing that unless they made 'a determined effort to deal with it effectively, it may land us in great difficulties in the future.' Cutting the supply of ammunition would force the tribes to revert to their old fighting methods, thus tipping the balance back in favour of British forces. Combined military-naval operations were essential to achieve success:

To attempt to stop this trade by means of purely naval operations is like fighting with one hand behind one's back. To exert our full strength and to make the utmost use of our seapower, we ought to follow up the operations afloat by action on shore, so as to ensure that any cargoes which escape our boats shall eventually fall into our hands.

Using a military force sufficient to deal with the arms traders would avoid having to utilise ships' crews for this purpose. With the advantage of mobility and secure communications a small force could be employed anywhere along the coast, seizing landed cargoes and meting out instant retribution to any village known to be storing arms without occupying any Persian territory.⁵²² Admiralty support provided the impetus previously lacking to find a practical solution. Backing within the Cabinet overpowered Morley's unwillingness to approve military measures proposed by Simla. Slade hoped that the simplicity of the action proposed, cutting the enemy line of communication, would help commend it to politicians.⁵²³ His wishes were only partly granted as Morley officially approved the

⁵²⁰ NLS MS 12739, Minto to Morley, 29 July 1909; MS 12744, Minto to Morley, 4 September 1909.

⁵²¹ NLS MS 12744, Morley to Minto, 15 January 1909, Minto to Morley, 4 May 1909.

⁵²² NLS MS 12771, Slade to Admiralty, 19 November 1909, Slade to Secretary to Government of India Military (Marine) Department, 19 November 1909, Slade to Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf, 20 November 1909.

⁵²³ NLS MS 12771, Slade to Minto, 26 November 1909.

blockade but not initially the mobile force.⁵²⁴ Even these concessions delighted Minto, who was sanguine about the prospects: 'if we get all we want, we shall really be in a fair position to do a great deal of good.'⁵²⁵

The blockade quickly demonstrated its effectiveness. Slade noted that 'the whole trade is stopped for the moment,' but commented that it was 'only the beginning of the struggle.' He and Minto faced an ongoing battle with London to prevent these measures being abandoned.⁵²⁶ Two issues remained problematic. To avoid the blockade being rendered useless it was essential to ensure that captured weapons were destroyed, which could not be guaranteed by maintaining existing arrangements with Persia and Muscat. Minto argued to Morley that Britain must press Persia to grant this right as an assertion of their dominance in the region. It was also necessary to provide a force to intercept caravans and seize caches, the importance of which had been emphasised by recent attacks by Afghan gun-runners on Slade's patrols.⁵²⁷

India's protest proved effective as the full blockade, including permission to launch raids inland to seize caches, and destroy captured weapons, was sanctioned in 1910.⁵²⁸ Morley, disgruntled at yet again having to approve military operations and unable to appreciate the threat posed by the arms traffic, remained determined to find an alternative solution involving less expenditure. Demonstrating his usual lack of vision when defence questions arose, he favoured reopening negotiations with France or imposing prohibitions at Muscat to restrict illegal imports.⁵²⁹ Although he stated to Morley that any settlement relieving India of the expense of maintaining the blockade would be welcome, Minto, supported by Slade and other Gulf officials, argued that no one plan would provide a complete solution; all operations had to work in conjunction if the arms trade was to be successfully stopped. The Sultan had only become willing to cooperate when Britain had demonstrated its ability to paralyse the trade, and while he was an important partner in the enterprise, Minto argued that 'it seems evident that the Sultan is not himself able to stop the import of arms, and that

⁵²⁴ NLS MS 12744, Morley to Minto, 6 December 1909.

⁵²⁵ NLS MS 12771, Minto to Creagh, 7 & 8 December 1909, Minto to Slade, 7 December 1909.

⁵²⁶ NLS MS 12771, Slade to Minto, 19 December 1909.

⁵²⁷ NLS MS 12771, Slade to Minto, 12 & 19 December 1909, Minto to Slade, 29 December 1909; MS 12744, Minto to Morley, 27 December 1909.

⁵²⁸ NLS MS 12676, p. 40; MS 12745, Telegraphic Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, 1910, Minto to Morley, 11 & 18 January 1910; MS 12772, Slade to Minto, 19 January 1910.

⁵²⁹ NLS MS 12745, Morley to Minto, 1 & 6 January, 20 & 21 February 1910.

we should have to do this for him.’⁵³⁰ As for diplomacy, Minto and Slade argued that continuing the blockade to further disrupt the traffic would facilitate negotiations with France. Stopping French imports into Muscat was an essential component in stopping the trade, but support from Persia was also required in preventing the weapons reaching the frontier.⁵³¹

In the absence of a diplomatic solution, Minto urged Morley to authorise the continuation of the blockade until December 1910, stressing that although successes had already been achieved, they could only reap the full effect by increasing their efforts.⁵³² Morley reluctantly agreed, petulantly adding that the blockade would be halted as soon as agreement with France was reached.⁵³³ As with the 1908 frontier operations, Minto’s arguments that forceful action could achieve effective results had been vindicated. Both the blockade and amphibious operations against the caravans in Persia achieved some success. Warships continued to intercept shipments, for example on 2 June 1910 HMS *Perseus* captured a dhow carrying 2260 rifles, 50 pistols and 270,000 rounds.⁵³⁴ Such conspicuous seizures led the Army Department to boast in their report that ‘these arrangements attained a large measure of success,’ as a total of over 2 million rounds of ammunition and 12,000 weapons had been seized, although large amounts of rifles and ammunition were still being landed in Persia.⁵³⁵

It soon became apparent that the blockade’s success in preventing cargoes from reaching Persia had some unwelcome consequences. In September 1910 Minto reported increasing evidence of tribal unrest as the Mullahs asserted that interference with the arms trade had impoverished the tribes, and exploited this grievance to incite jihad:

Owing to the serious losses sustained by the tribesmen engaged in the arms trade, owing to our suppression of the arms traffic in the Gulf, a feeling of exasperation exists on the Frontier; Mr Merk has reported that the jirgas of the clans most

⁵³⁰ NLS MS 12745, Minto to Morley, 3, 11 January, 1 & 13 February 1910.

⁵³¹ NLS MS 12745, Morley to Minto, 21 March & 22 April 1910; Minto to Morley, 14 March, 19 May, 11 August & 20 September 1910.

⁵³² NLS MS 12745, Minto to Morley, 7 June & 16 July 1910.

⁵³³ NLS MS 12745, Morley to Minto, 2 June & 26 September 1910.

⁵³⁴ NLS MS 12745, Minto to Morley, 2 June 1910.

⁵³⁵ See tables in NLS MS 12676, p. 41.

severely affected admit their inability to control the malcontents, whose intentions are openly and avowedly hostile.⁵³⁶

Interference with the arms supply had created a minor crisis on the frontier as tribes tried to compensate for their heavy financial losses by cross-frontier raiding. The naval blockade had successfully interdicted the arms traffic as seizures of weapons and ammunition continued up to 1914. Prices subsequently increased, leading to a return to domestic sources. However, British failure to confront the traffic effectively had allowed the tribes to amass a huge arsenal that shifted the military balance and created a potential crisis for frontier defence. India's military authorities were forced to rearm the irregular frontier forces to enable them to hold their own against tribal raiders armed with better rifles, and to consider in their war plans the likely impact of improved tribal weaponry in any future war.⁵³⁷

Minto's response to the arms trade, like most of the other frontier problems he encountered, demonstrated the pragmatism at the heart of Britain's approach to its Empire. While Morley was driven by a radical interpretation of Liberal policies aiming to reduce imperial military expenditure, stabilise relations with Russia, and adopt a more conciliatory approach to the Empire's native peoples, Minto was required to respond immediately to any perceived threats to India's safety. Minto's personal experience of the frontier brought such dangers into sharp focus, while Morley's relative ignorance made it difficult for him to appreciate how much the influx of sophisticated weaponry revolutionised the military situation in a vulnerable and potentially explosive region. He grasped at any solution that would avoid the deployment of military force, expenditure for military purposes or the embroilment of India beyond its borders, refusing to listen to Minto's protests that attempts to reach agreements with France should be secondary to the actual business of physically stopping the gun-runners. Morley allowed his liberal philosophy to interfere with the process of governing and defending the Empire, he was probably one of the few involved in efforts to stop the traffic who did not wonder how much more could have been achieved if they acted more forcefully, a criticism that could be applied to many of his interventions

⁵³⁶ NLS MS 12676, p. 54; MS 12740, Minto to Morley, 7 September 1910; MS 12728, Minto to George V, 8 September 1910.

⁵³⁷ See the report of the Army in India Committee in the India Office Library Military Collections L/MIL/17/5/1751/1 & 2, and Burrell, 'Arms and Afghans', passim; Busch, *Persian Gulf*, pp. 270-288; Moreman, 'Arms Trade', passim; Moreman, *Frontier Warfare*, pp. 96-97.

in Indian defence policy. Equally little consideration was given to how his dictatorial control over India's defence damaged the prestige of its Government.

4. Exploiting Solidarity: Minto and the Generals

Minto's military exploits had provided invaluable experience of the Empire and enabled him to establish close contacts with many senior military officers and politicians. The high rank he had obtained through his command of the local Volunteer force added to his prestige, an important asset for an aristocratic governor. A common background created a similarity of outlook between Minto and his military colleagues; he valued their advice above other sources and often relied on their support. Military issues remained a source of interest throughout his imperial career, and his knowledge proved useful as formulation of defence policy was a central responsibility for imperial governors. It produced much conflict with politicians, however, as the views of governors, familiar with conditions at the periphery and charged with protecting British interests and defending local populations, frequently clashed with London's wish to avoid policies requiring expenditure or commitment of resources. The influence Minto could exercise over decisions varied. While his views on Canadian defence diverged from the changing trends of British policy, which aimed at consensus with Laurier's government, he and Kitchener retained significant control over Indian defence, successfully preventing Morley's attempts to reduce expenditure. Minto's military correspondents, like Roberts and Wolseley, shared his views about the primacy of Britain's obligation to defend its Empire, but he had few contacts with the emerging generation of soldiers who focused on Europe and whose ideas increasingly shaped British policies.

Minto's appointment to Canada coincided with the highpoint of British imperial strength. Worrying indications in the 1890s of future challenges, such as Venezuela, had presaged the disaster that engulfed Britain in South Africa barely a year into his tenure. Widespread historical consensus exists about the impact of the Boer War on British military and foreign policy, as Johnson states, it was 'a conflict which had opened an alarming abyss at the feet of British political and military leaders.'⁵³⁸ The many threats Britain faced had become apparent during its prolonged struggle to overcome the Boers, making the need for military reform and reprioritisation of foreign policy objectives obvious.

⁵³⁸ F.A. Johnson, *Defence by Committee: The British CID 1885-1959* (OUP, London, 1960), p.48. Useful analyses of the changes in British defence and foreign policy can be found in K. Wilson 'The Boer War in the Context of Britain's Imperial Problems', in Wilson (ed.) *International Impact*, pp. 158-167; Jeffery 'The Impact of the South African War on Imperial Defence', pp. 188-202; Searle '“National Efficiency” and the “Lessons” of the War', pp. 194-211.

Alarming deficiencies in the Army's performance and organisation were exposed by the shocks of Black Week, problems which Elgin's commission confirmed and further publicised. Military reform focused on two areas. Attempts to restructure the army faltered during Balfour's administration, as a lack of consensus and direction, coupled with a failure to reduce inflated expenditure, torpedoed both Brodrick and Arnold-Forster's schemes.⁵³⁹ Haldane, 'unencumbered with preconceived notions or dogma,'⁵⁴⁰ recognised his predecessor's failings and worked with the Generals and his Cabinet colleagues to implement a scheme that met their respective aims of securing military efficiency and reducing the estimates. Financial constraints and troop numbers, rather than any preconceived continental strategy, determined the BEF's size, as defending the Empire remained its primary purpose.⁵⁴¹ Balfour's government, aided by the energetic Esher, proved more successful in improving the machinery for coordination and planning. The War Office was reformed to improve its efficiency, most notably by creating a General Staff to undertake the analysis of intelligence and contingency planning sadly missing in South Africa. The CID was established to provide the formal coordination necessary to overcome the complex defence problems facing Britain, although whether it actually achieved this aim is a matter of debate.⁵⁴²

The revelation of dangerous vulnerability drove a 'rapid and dramatic reorientation'⁵⁴³ of British foreign policy to deal with the most obvious weakness of 'strategic

⁵³⁹ M. Arnold-Forster, *HO Arnold-Forster: A Memoir* (Arnold, London, 1910), pp. 223ff; Brodrick, *Records and Reactions*, pp. 119ff; Clarke, *My Working Life*, pp. 173-83; P. Fraser, *Lord Esher* (Hart-Davis, McGibbon, London, 1973), pp. 122-147; R. Mackay, *Balfour: Intellectual Statesman* (OUP, Oxford, 1985), pp. 156-194; L.J. Satre 'St John Brodrick and Army Reform, 1901-1903' *JBS* 15(1976), pp. 117-139; Searle, *A New England?* pp. 319-320; G. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1971), pp. 34-53; E. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (Longman, London, 1980), pp. 240-60; A. Tucker 'The Issue of Army Reform in the Unionist Government, 1903-1905' *HJ* 9 (1966), pp. 90-100; R. Williams, *Defending the Empire* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1991), pp. 6-52.

⁵⁴⁰ P. Rowland, *The Last Liberal Governments Vol. I* (Barrie & Rockliffe, London, 1968), pp. 187ff.

⁵⁴¹ NLS R.B. Haldane Papers, MS 5907, R.B. Haldane Correspondence, 1906 to 1907, Haldane to Esher, 14 February 1906; H.F.A. Strachan, 'The British Army, its General Staff and the Continental Commitment, 1904-1914', pp. 75-94; S. Koss, *Lord Haldane: Scapegoat for Liberalism* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1969), pp. 39ff; Spiers, *Army and Society*, pp. 265ff; E. Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1980), passim; H.F.A. Strachan, *The First World War Vol. I: To Arms* (OUP, Oxford, 2001), p.26; T. Travers, *The Killing Ground: Command and Technology on the Western Front, 1900-1918* (Pen & Sword, Barnsley, 2003).

⁵⁴² On the CID, see N. D'ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy: Defence Administration in Peacetime Britain, 1902-1914* (OUP, Oxford, 1973), and Johnson, *Defence by Committee*.

⁵⁴³ Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 12.

overextension.⁵⁴⁴ Its goal was to maintain the global balance of power, while reducing both expenditure and the number of threats it faced, thus enabling Britain to meet the increasing number of challenges thrown by an unfriendly world. Rapprochement with America allowed the virtual withdrawal of the remaining forces from the Western Hemisphere, while alliance with Japan strengthened its position in the Far East. The creation of a semblance of stability in these important fringes provided the freedom to continue attempts to improve relations with France and Russia, the most immediate threats to the Empire. However, this policy only served to further embitter relations with Germany, thus leading to an equally dramatic reorientation of strategy, as the General Staff in particular shifted its attention towards countering the threats posed to the Entente.⁵⁴⁵

Canada and India, the most important and potentially most vulnerable parts of the Empire, were integral to the changes introduced to reorient British defence policy. Military reform and reorganisation here pre-dated British efforts, as both had to be made secure against the menacing presence of great powers on lengthy and practically indefensible frontiers. Diplomatic realignment, driven by a growing awareness that military plans for war against the US and Russian were divorced from strategic reality, meant that during Minto's time in Canada and India the military was searching for a new role and trying to justify the continuation of expensive schemes to politicians reluctant to sanction expenditure involving little obvious benefit. Soldiers in both looked to Minto for support in this struggle and his military experience was held to be invaluable for both posts. As Borden stressed:

It is true that the conditions in India are in many respects the very opposite of those in Canada, especially from a military standpoint, with which you have had to deal, but I am sure the Canadian experience will prove none the less valuable in that account, especially in view of your long military training and associations.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁴ Lieven, *Empire*, p.108. See also Bartlett, *Defence and Diplomacy*, pp.89ff; Hyam, *Imperial Century*, pp. 257-66; J. Gallagher, *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 83ff; Williams, *Defending the Empire*, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁵ Charmley, *Splendid Isolation?*, passim; French & Reid, *British General Staff*, passim; J. McDermott, 'The Revolution in British Military Thinking from the Boer War to the Moroccan Crisis' in P. Kennedy (ed.) *The War Plans of the Great Powers* (George Allen, London, 1979), pp. 99-111; Steiner, *Britain and the Origins*, passim.

⁵⁴⁶ NLS MS 12401, Borden to Minto, 1 October 1905.

The contrasting military positions in Canada and India were something that many of Minto's Canadian correspondents noted when congratulating him on his appointment to India:

It will I am sure, afford you much satisfaction...to govern a country in which there exists something like an army, and something very like a C-in-C after leaving one possessing neither one nor the other.⁵⁴⁷

The differences between the two military organisations emphasise the different approaches Britain adopted towards governing its Empire. In Canada, facing negligible threat of either internal rebellion or war with America, there was felt to be little justification for a large military establishment. Indifference to military policy was widespread and expenditure per capita was one of the lowest levels in the world. The force was dominated by the amateur volunteer militia, which had a maximum effective strength of 65,000, composed of infantry, cavalry and artillery units raised in both urban and rural areas. Their efficiency varied markedly, much dependent on the enthusiasm and wealth of the local notables who served as officers. It proved difficult to concentrate any sizeable portion of the force even for the limited amount of annual training it was contracted for given its voluntary nature and the size of the country. Its main purpose was 'aid to the civil power' during strikes and riots.⁵⁴⁸ A small nucleus of a professional 'permanent' force existed, numbering around 3000, serving as instructors to the militia. Scattered across Canada, it proved difficult to attract candidates of a suitable calibre because of the poor pay and conditions. Britain retained a minimal military presence, maintaining small garrisons at the fortresses of Halifax and Esquimalt, the former an important coaling station. Consideration of the defence of these two outposts occupied some of the CID's attention when it was not endlessly debating India, but the complexities and expense involved, allied with the unlikelihood of any attack, encouraged Britain to initiate the process of final withdrawal while handing over responsibility to the Canadians. Confusion about its purpose led to serious consideration among the military and imperial officials in Canada about the role the Dominion could fulfil in the defence of the Empire, especially after its contribution to the South African war, but any wider responsibility was something Laurier's government was reluctant to discuss. Successive GOCs made valiant efforts to create out of the

⁵⁴⁷ NLS MS 12400, Blane to Minto, 31 August 1905.

⁵⁴⁸ D. Morton, 'Aid to the Civil Power: The Canadian Militia in Support of Social Order 1867-1914' *CHR* 51 (1970), pp. 407-425.

ramshackle militia a national army capable of defending Canada or assisting Britain in the event of a serious emergency but frequently encountered insurmountable obstacles.⁵⁴⁹

India's Commanders-in-Chief faced the equally difficult task of reorganising the second largest concentration of professional forces in the Empire into an efficient army capable of meeting the numerous obligations imposed by British rule in India, prioritisation of which set the pattern for military reform. The presence of 75,000 British and 150,000 Indian regular troops, constituting the Army in India, assisted by contingents from the Princely states and irregular forces on the North West Frontier, underlined the fact that Britain believed India could only be effectively ruled by the sword. These forces existed to defend the Raj from external threats to its integrity posed by the Russian presence beyond Afghanistan and the fanatical tribal population of the frontier, and were ultimately responsible for the maintenance of internal order, although the Indian Army itself was believed to present the greatest threat in this regard.⁵⁵⁰

The two commanders had contrasting levels of power and responsibility, but both faced similar problems that damaged civil-military relations and threatened the hopes of successfully introducing reforms. In Canada, the GOC Militia was subordinate to the Minister of the Militia in the Cabinet, and was not technically the senior military adviser to the Governor, that honour going to the GOC Halifax. The latter commanded the small number of British troops and was usually of senior rank to the GOC Militia, whose authority was limited to Canadian forces. The failure to properly define responsibilities between civil and military officials, and the patronage opportunities created by the militia that encouraged constant political interference in its everyday operation, something that imperial officials worked hard to eradicate, damaged relations to the extent that few GOCs served their full term. In contrast the Army in India Commander-in-Chief had extensive power over all the forces in India, both British and Indian, and was responsible to the imperial government, through the Governor General in Council, for all military policy in India. He exercised some responsibility for civil policy by virtue of his seat on the Viceroy's Executive Council, and was second only to the Viceroy in the order of

⁵⁴⁹ Morton, *Ministers and General*, passim; Morton, *Canada at War*, pp. 32ff; Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense*, passim; Sarty, 'Canada and the Great Rapprochement', pp. 12-42.

⁵⁵⁰ T.A. Heathcote, *The Military in British India* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995), pp. 180ff; 'The Army of British India' in D Chandler (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Army* (OUP, Oxford, 1994), pp. 376-401; 'The Indian Army and the Grand Strategy of Empire to 1913' in A.J. Guy & P.B. Boyden (eds.), *Soldiers of the Raj* (National Army Museum, London, 1997), pp. 20-27.

precedence. Kitchener, who resented the presence of an alternative source of advice to the Viceroy on military issues, did much to concentrate even greater levels of control in the C-in-C's hands through the abolition of the Military Department. Although the system of dual control was finally destroyed, his actions had disastrous consequences for the efficiency of the Indian Army in war. His struggle with Curzon also brought the Government of India to a standstill, and Minto's appointment was partially motivated by a desire to both restore some semblance of normality while taking advantage of his military experience to implement the new system of army administration.

Canada: the Limits of Gubernatorial Influence

After the participation debates Minto's attention focused on two interlinked issues. Attempts to eradicate political interference from the militia continued as a necessary precursor to reforming the force, but this remained a source of tension, leading the Canadian authorities to reorganise the command. Minto believed that improving Canada's defensive capabilities was in the Empire's interest and thus an important gubernatorial duty, but his personal attachment to issues and changes in British policy meant that his views were not always accepted.

Debate over Canadian participation in South Africa further strained the already tense relations between the imperial and Dominion authorities. Hutton had brandished his popularity against colleagues and superiors, alienating potential supporters, as had happened during the dispute that erupted with Seymour over the respective responsibilities of their commands. The Halifax commander, inspired by the example of a proactive predecessor who had taken advantage of a weak GOC Militia to offer advice to the Canadian Government and Governor, mistakenly believed he had power over all forces in Canada. Seymour vociferously complained about being bypassed as chief military adviser and accusations of interference with the militia,⁵⁵¹ but proved unable to convince Minto that his views were correct. He resigned amid questions about his mental stability, seen by some historians as the root of the conflict, who argue accordingly that 'his complaints cannot be taken too seriously.'⁵⁵² The War Office subsequently decided to downgrade the Halifax post to clarify the complex command structure, strengthening Canadian claims for increased autonomy. More importantly, relations between Hutton and Borden had become embittered over attempts to enforce orders limiting the tenure of command for long-serving officers. Hutton took attempts to remove Domville, also a Liberal MP, as a test case for his policy of preventing political interference undermining the discipline and order of the militia, an aim Minto wholeheartedly supported.⁵⁵³ The decision to remove Domville was publicly lauded as a triumph for efficiency, strengthening the GOC's power over

⁵⁵¹ NLS MS 12578 contains some 300 pages of letters about perceived slights. See also MS 12556 and 12557 for Minto's replies and correspondence with Hutton and Lansdowne on the issue. Hutton's version of events can be found in BL Add MSS 50088.

⁵⁵² Preston, *Imperial Defense*, pp. 255-57. Miller, in *Canadian Career*, pp. 75-80, takes a more sympathetic view of Seymour's conduct, blaming the tactless Hutton for the problems. See also Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, pp. 149-150. Minto dismissed Seymour as a 'lunatic' in a letter to his brother of 19 May 1900, *LMCP I*, pp. 355-57.

⁵⁵³ *LMCP I*, Minto to Hutton, 3 June 1899, p. 74.

appointments, but Hutton had actually conceded Borden's viewpoint under pressure from Minto, who was anxious to prevent an open breach.⁵⁵⁴

Hutton's public boasts that the despatch of the first contingent represented his successful assertion of military authority over political interference merely heightened Canadian bitterness.⁵⁵⁵ Minto was urged by Laurier to curtail the GOC's public pronouncements, but although the governor had long been anxious for Hutton to avoid public speaking, he supported the GOC's aim of liberating Canadian military organisation from politics and tried to defend him, somewhat speciously, against criticisms that he had discussed political subjects.⁵⁵⁶ Although aware of the need to avoid friction with the Dominion government, Minto felt it more important to defend imperial interests during a time of crisis. Minto recognised that despite his support, Hutton's position was dangerously tenuous. As he stressed to Chamberlain in January 1900, the willingness of Laurier's government to tolerate what they regarded as insubordination had been exhausted and they were anxious to remove the GOC.⁵⁵⁷ Hutton's apparent association with the opposition over militia reform led Minto to expect serious trouble; he only hoped that it would come over an issue where the GOC was in the right.⁵⁵⁸

Horse purchases for the second contingent provoked the final collision. Hutton refused to work with the inspector Borden had insisted on appointing, criticising the move as an unjustifiable interference with the GOC's duties and incompatible with 'any known military routine.'⁵⁵⁹ For Minto it perfectly demonstrated the Government's distrust of Hutton and lack of appreciation for the appropriate positions to be held by the general and the minister.⁵⁶⁰ These accusations were vehemently denied by Laurier's government, which countered by arguing that Hutton had disregarded their instructions by refusing to let a well-qualified official do his duty. They urged Hutton to consider the public interest

⁵⁵⁴ *LMCP I*, Minto to Hutton, 9 & 28 June, pp. 77, 89, Minto to Borden, 26 June 1899, p. 89; Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 64-70; Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, pp. 145-48; Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 161-67, 175-82.

⁵⁵⁵ Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, p. 155; Penlington, 'Hutton', pp. 164-69.

⁵⁵⁶ *LMCP I*, Minto to Laurier, 7 & 8 November 1899, pp. 182-183.

⁵⁵⁷ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 7 January 1900, pp. 227-229.

⁵⁵⁸ *LMCP I*, Minto to Lansdowne, 17 December 1899, pp. 205-208, Minto to Chamberlain, 7 & 18 January 1900, pp. 227-29, 233-37.

⁵⁵⁹ *LMCP I*, To the Honourable the Privy Council, 3 February 1900.

⁵⁶⁰ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 18 January 1900, pp. 233-37, Draft Memo, 20 January 1900, pp. 238-42, Memo, 27 January 1900, pp. 247-50, Hutton to Minto, 31 January 1900, pp. 260-69, To the Honourable the Privy Council, 3 February 1900, pp. 269-74.

‘rather than how he could establish for himself a position in the public service wholly independent of all ministerial control.’⁵⁶¹

Minto admitted Hutton’s tactlessness, but he blamed the Canadians for their over-sensitive reaction to any perceived threats to their autonomy. He was determined to fulfil his duty to defend the imperial tie against the threat posed by Laurier’s demands for Hutton’s resignation, although his suggestion that it would be easier to replace Borden was swiftly and angrily rejected. Minto hoped to utilise the opportunity provided to properly define the respective duties of the GOC and the minister, to ensure that while supreme authority remained with the latter, the former could exercise executive authority over military affairs without fear of interference.⁵⁶² He was therefore determined that Laurier’s Government accept responsibility for their actions in dismissing such a high official, and that any repeat of the previous ‘whitewashes’ should be avoided. He thus rejected British suggestions of sending Hutton to South Africa as an easy way out. Ignoring Laurier’s threats of resignation, Minto insisted that a request for recall based on such trivial accusations at a time of danger for the Empire should be embodied in a Privy Council order rather than a despatch, also claiming that he was bound to state his own opinion if the government went through with its actions.⁵⁶³ Minto agreed that Hutton’s relations with the government rendered his continued command useless, but he believed that the ministers’ action ‘was instigated much by personal feelings against the general,’ rather than any justifiable political reason.⁵⁶⁴ Hutton had complained that it was ‘evident that my arrival was not welcomed by the government’ and that their discourtesy towards him had been inspired by their opposition to ‘militarism’ and imperialism. This paled into insignificance when compared with Borden’s failure to support Hutton’s efforts to eliminate the party political interference that damaged militia efficiency and endangered both Canadian and imperial defence. The GOC despaired of the hopes for reform, complaining he was:

Truly and deeply sick at heart over the Militia....[it was] impossible to evolve order out of chaos and make dirty water run clear when the political atmosphere pollutes everything.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶¹ *LMCP I*, Memo from the Privy Council, 4 February 1900, pp. 269-74.

⁵⁶² *LMCP I*, Memo, 27 Jan 1900, pp. 247-50; Miller, *Canadian Career*, p. 109.

⁵⁶³ *LMCP I*, Minto to Laurier, 27 January 1900, pp. 250-51, Memo, 30 January 1900, pp. 254-55.

⁵⁶⁴ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 1 February 1900, pp. 257-58.

⁵⁶⁵ *LMCP I*, Hutton to Minto, 31 January & 3 February 1900, pp. 259-69.

Arguing that the GOC's attitude towards, and relations with, the government had made his retention impossible, Laurier's government decided to officially ask for Hutton's recall to avoid any controversy over dismissal.⁵⁶⁶ In this instance Minto allowed his desire to support his friend and determination to protect imperial interests outweigh his usually pragmatic approach to such issues. He reiterated his wish to avoid pressing upon Laurier the continued services of a disagreeable officer, but still carried out his threat to officially record his opinions of the situation. Defending Hutton against the government's accusations and upholding his record, Minto again argued that the difficulties had been created by the government's mistaken views about the appropriate division of military responsibilities. Supreme constitutional authority evidently rested with the government but to obviate friction the minister had to focus on departmental administration and expenditure, thus allowing the GOC to exercise control over military issues. Minto argued that the main problem was obvious, as it was 'universally admitted that political influence has done much to impair the efficiency of the militia.' Only an experienced British officer dissociated from these baneful political influences could effectively command the force, but all appointees had struggled to reconcile the performance of their duties with the government's wishes and Minto expressed his doubts that any 'high-minded officer' would accept the post in future unless such difficulties were removed.⁵⁶⁷

Minto's case was undermined by further revelations about Hutton's insubordination: the GOC had erroneously informed two officers who had been removed from a list of candidates for a staff college course that this had been done for political reasons, which emphasised for Laurier that such conditions in the Militia Department could not be allowed to continue. Little support was forthcoming from Britain. Appalled by Minto's determination to create friction with Laurier's government, the Colonial Office ignored appeals to retain Hutton and agreed to comply with requests for his recall. Convinced that his case was sound, but stretching his constitutional powers somewhat, Minto refused to inform the Canadian government in an effort to force them to dismiss the GOC and provoke a public outcry.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁶ *LMCP I*, Privy Council to Minto, 27 January 1900, pp. 250-51, Laurier to Minto, 30 January 1900, p. 255.

⁵⁶⁷ *LMCP I*, To the Honourable the Privy Council, 3 February 1900, pp. 269-74, Draft Memo, 20 January 1900, pp. 238-42.

⁵⁶⁸ Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 110ff; Penlington, 'Hutton', p. 169; *LMCP I*, Laurier to Minto, 30 January 1900, p. 255.

Laurier's government emphatically rejected Minto's arguments. The GOC was a servant of the Canadian, rather than the imperial, authorities. He held no independent power and was entirely subordinate to the Minister. Failure by GOCs to understand the correct relationship had created tension, not political interference or discourtesy. Hutton had done nothing towards the organisation of the contingent, and his attitude towards the Government and contempt for ministerial authority meant that retaining his services was not in the public interest; recall was now the most respectful option.⁵⁶⁹ Minto recognised that his tactics, if not his strategy, had been mistaken. To prevent Laurier's resignation, he now had little choice but to accept the Government's assertion of its authority by dismissing Hutton, a decision which resulted from their belief that further action was necessary after Britain rejected earlier requests for recall. Surprised by Canada's precipitate action, the Colonial Office was infuriated when it realised that Minto had not forwarded their instructions, and wishing to avoid a public controversy, efforts were made to obtain service for Hutton in South Africa.⁵⁷⁰

Limited reflection on the affair illustrated his wish to draw a line under a 'disappointing transaction.' Minto found it difficult to maintain a consistent position, informing Hutton that he had signed the Privy Council Order with regret, believing that his departure would have a lamentable effect on the militia, and arguing to both the GOC and Chamberlain that he merely wanted the government to accept responsibility and record reasons for their actions.⁵⁷¹ Simultaneously he agreed with the Colonial Secretary that it was a mistake to force an unwelcome general on his ministers and that pushing their advocacy of Hutton's position too far would have been resented as unjustifiable imperial pressure. His conclusions highlighted his inability to understand the Government's position, but also vaguely hinted at a belief that the Canadians were not solely responsible for the troubles. Minto believed that bitter feeling over the first contingent had intensified Canadian determination to remove Hutton, the discourtesy demonstrated towards him was merely the tool adopted to achieve this aim. While reiterating that Borden had unjustifiably assumed control of details for personal and political reasons, Minto admitted that Hutton had been insufficiently careful in his attempts to reform all the abuses in the militia and encourage military enthusiasm throughout Canada. His faults, however, were those of a man keen to

⁵⁶⁹ *LMCP I*, Memo from the Privy Council, 4 February 1900, pp. 276-86.

⁵⁷⁰ Miller, *Canadian Career*, p. 116; Stevens & Saywell, *Canadian Papers*, pp. lv-lvi.

⁵⁷¹ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 7 February 1900, pp. 289-91, Minto to Hutton, 7 February 1900, p. 292.

succeed in his work: 'whatever small mistakes he may have made here his great energy and ability under difficult circumstances deserve recognition.'⁵⁷²

Minto and Hutton, aware that they lacked public support, were forced to abandon their plans to request a Royal Commission into militia administration. Miller argues that Hutton's departure removed a troublesome liability for Minto, helping to improve his relations with the Canadian government, especially Borden.⁵⁷³ However the wounds caused by the incident did not heal immediately and Minto remained annoyed about Canadian administration of its military forces:

I regret to say that since the departure of General Hutton, the conduct of Militia affairs has become daily more unsatisfactory...the minister aiming at a complete personal control over every military detail, the object of which is unfortunately evident.⁵⁷⁴

While he had wished to avoid sparking a crisis with Laurier's government during the South African war Chamberlain shared his Governor's vexation about the incident and the threat it posed to his long-term goals: 'As long as politics play so large a part in military arrangements in Canada these difficulties will constantly recur.' His despatch on the history of the GOC's post indicated his 'sense of injury to imperial interests done by political interference.' In an effort to encourage the Canadians to alter their attitude towards the senior imperial officers sent to work with them, Chamberlain expressed his regret that they had been unable to allow Hutton to complete his work when he had achieved much and reminded them that Britain, still responsible for defending all its imperial possessions, retained an interest in the efficiency of the militia.⁵⁷⁵

Laurier's government refuted Chamberlain's criticisms, blaming Hutton's misconception of his position for the unsatisfactory condition of affairs in the militia. The government had been willing to concede the GOC greater control over military issues, but could not 'yield to claims which practically would make the General the Controller of the policy of the

⁵⁷² *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 7 & 8 February 1900, pp. 289-92.

⁵⁷³ Miller, *Canadian Career*, p. 119.

⁵⁷⁴ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 5 April 1900, pp. 331-32.

⁵⁷⁵ *LMCP I*, Chamberlain to Minto, 2 March & 17 April 1900, pp. 306-308, 342-43.

Government in Militia matters.’ Mistakenly believing himself independent from government authority, Hutton had been guilty of consistent insubordination, making frequent speeches, passing information to journalists, announcing policy decisions without authorisation, and preventing officers and officials communicating with Borden without his permission. Further problems had been caused by Hutton’s offensive and discourteous manner, making proper administration of the department, and therefore his continued tenure, impossible. Suggestions that the ‘spirit of enthusiasm and devotion to duty, the fruits of which were manifested in the splendid service rendered by the Canadian contingents in South Africa’ were in any way attributable to Hutton merely angered them further, ignoring as it did the existing strength of Canadian imperial zeal and enthusiasm.⁵⁷⁶ Such contentions infuriated Minto, who believed that the ‘spirit which animates [them is] no doubt largely due to personal animosity against General Hutton.’⁵⁷⁷ Contrary to their claims, the administration of the militia appeared superficially efficient ‘till one comes on something behind the scenes which makes one’s hair stand on end.’⁵⁷⁸ Minto still argued that the Canadian version of the relations that should prevail between the Minister and the general were incompatible with the position of authority and respect necessary for a high appointment like the GOC or the efficient direction of military administration. Canadian assumptions that actual military command rested with the minister, thus justifying interference in military detail, reduced the GOC to the status of a chief clerk. Ministers, in Minto’s view, were incapable of understanding that the undoubted constitutional authority of the government over the military did not render interference with the executive power of the military expert appointed to command advisable.⁵⁷⁹ Minto’s refusal to trust Laurier’s Government with military affairs created further difficulties over the distribution of 44 regular army commissions granted by the War Office. He feared that his ministers viewed these simply as patronage, and the resultant tension only eased when a compromise was agreed granting the governor final responsibility for nominations in the absence of a GOC, providing he acted on the advice of his ministers.

Miller is correct to argue that the anomalous position of the GOC had become an ‘obsession’ for Minto. Arguably the most important imperial issue, it provided an

⁵⁷⁶ *LMCP I*, Extract from the Privy Council Committee Report, 9 June 1900, Memo by Borden, 17 April 1900 pp. 362-68.

⁵⁷⁷ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 13 June 1900, pp. 362-64.

⁵⁷⁸ *LMCP I*, Minto to Lansdowne, 14 June 1900, pp. 368-70.

⁵⁷⁹ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 13 June 1900, pp. 362-64.

opportunity for the Governor to enlarge his role by ensuring that Canada fulfilled its obligations. Minto remained deeply interested in military affairs. He shared Hutton's aim of fully utilising Canada's excellent military material for imperial defence and he believed his links with the War Office and the British military establishment enabled him to initiate Canadian reform plans compatible with imperial strategy.⁵⁸⁰ Unless the GOC's position was properly defined however, any hope of achieving these aims would rapidly evaporate. Minto prodded the British authorities to persuade the Canadian government to accept the proper division of authority; the GOC had to be treated as an expert, whose professional advice was heeded, and who could operate free from civilian interference in military administration.⁵⁸¹ His exhortations produced some result, as Chamberlain rebuked the Canadians, advising them that, to prevent future conflict, it was necessary to allow the GOC a freer hand in matters essential to discipline than that granted to an ordinary civil servant.⁵⁸²

Practical concerns reduced the chances of achieving such laudable aims. Minto, brought into closer contact with the Militia Department in the absence of a GOC or Military Secretary, discovered that 'military matters here are degenerating into a disreputable chaos.' Unless a good officer was appointed he feared that the situation would deteriorate further, and he appealed for the provision of an imperial officer even as a 'stop-gap.'⁵⁸³ The pool of suitable officers was drastically reduced by British commitment in South Africa and Wolseley's concerns about the difficulties of coping with the atmosphere of political interference.⁵⁸⁴ Minto dismissed Laurier's suggestions to appoint his former Military Secretary, believing it was merely a ploy to appease him after the recent tension, and fearing it would expose him to accusations of interference. He argued that only the appointment of an officer 'whose rank and military reputation command respect' could advance the cause of military reform.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁰ Miller, *Canadian Career*, p. 136.

⁵⁸¹ NLS MS 12556, Minto to Wolseley, 17 March & 4 April 1900; MS 12557, Minto to Wolseley, 26 May 1900.

⁵⁸² *LMCP I*, Chamberlain to Minto, 17 April 1900, pp. 342-43.

⁵⁸³ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 8 February 1900, pp. 293-95; NLS MS 12556, Minto to Lansdowne, 18 February & 9 March 1900, Minto to Wolseley, 17 March 1900; MS 12568, Lansdowne to Minto, 4 March 1900.

⁵⁸⁴ NLS MS 12579, Lord Minto's Canadian Military and Naval Correspondence, September 1898 to December 1901, Wolseley to Minto, 30 March 1900; MS 12568, Lansdowne, 4 & 27 March 1900.

⁵⁸⁵ NLS MS 12568, Minto to Chamberlain, 12 May 1900, Minto to Lansdowne, 12 April 1900.

The tenure of Haly, appointed as a temporary replacement, proved an oasis of calm compared to that of his predecessor, who bitterly criticised the new GOC for having more brains than courage, as ‘only men of that class...are available at home now, or would go to expose themselves to the indignities and petty annoyances of Laurier and co.’⁵⁸⁶ Haly was aware of the difficulties involved in his new post and that ‘many capable General[s] have failed,’ but he still hoped to ‘steer clear of the shoals ahead.’⁵⁸⁷ Avoiding friction completely was impossible given the nature of the command, but his willingness to work within the limitations imposed by the Canadian conception of the post and amiably accept directions from the Minister, made him popular with the Canadian government, who came to regard him as an ideal GOC.⁵⁸⁸ Such developments concerned Minto, although he was undoubtedly pleased with the generally improved atmosphere of militia administration, particularly his relations with Borden, praising the Minister’s interest in his work. His outlook brightened, as anxieties that no imperial officer capable of rescuing what was regarded as an impossible position were replaced with optimism about what an energetic and tactful soldier, working with the Governor, could achieve.⁵⁸⁹ However, in Minto’s opinion, Haly was ‘not the man for the place,’⁵⁹⁰ and he complained privately that ‘the GOC is absolutely useless.’⁵⁹¹ Minto reported that Haly had abdicated his authority, arguing that his surrender of undivided military control to Borden was detrimental to the interests of the force and likely to frustrate Britain’s desire for Canada to contribute to imperial defence.⁵⁹² Canadian suggestions to permanently appoint Haly reinforced Minto’s contempt for their administrative methods, about which he complained vociferously to Brodrick and Roberts:

The chief difficulty has always been the interference by the Minister of Militia in the executive command of the force. This interference has been frequently for corrupt political purposes in the case of promotions or otherwise, it has broken the heart of good officers and the resistance of the GOC has only been taken as an unjustifiable interference with the authority and patronage of the Minister.

⁵⁸⁶ NLS MS 12576, Hutton to Minto, 5 & 19 July 1900.

⁵⁸⁷ NLS MS 12579, Haly to Minto, 8 August 1900.

⁵⁸⁸ Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, pp. 167-73; NLS MS 12558, Minto to Haly, 18 October 1901 & 5 June 1902.

⁵⁸⁹ *LMCP I*, Minto to Brodrick, 19 November 1900, pp. 430-35; *LMCP II*, Minto to Chamberlain, 22 April 1901, Minto to Brodrick, 14 May 1901, pp. 38-41; NLS MS 12568, Minto to Lansdowne, 12 May 1900.

⁵⁹⁰ *LMCP II*, Minto to Roberts, 1 October 1901, pp. 76-79; NLS MS 12557, Minto to Roberts 8 August 1901.

⁵⁹¹ *LMCP II*, Minto to Kitson, 10 September 1901, pp. 74-75.

⁵⁹² NLS MS 12579, Lee to Stanley, 12 August 1901; *LMCP II*, Minto to Brodrick, 29 May 1902, pp. 162-64.

Optimistically Minto believed that only the appointment of a distinguished officer would 'nullify corrupt opposition' and 'eradicate abuses.'⁵⁹³

As the informed analysis of the militarily experienced 'man on the spot', Minto's views evidently carried some weight with Britain's military authorities. When combined with reports that Haly and Borden had recommended that vastly reducing the militia was the only way to improve its efficiency⁵⁹⁴ they compounded heightened fears about Canada's ability to fulfil imperial obligations or defend itself against American attack. Planning for this unpalatable contingency had been reinvigorated by fears about British vulnerability and isolation, tensions over Alaska, and inter-service rivalry over dominance in imperial defence. Military investigations confirmed that the Canadian government had done little to implement previous recommendations, such as those made by the 1898 Leach Commission,⁵⁹⁵ to improve its defences, much to British frustration:

What is the use of defence committee reports if no action is taken – do they imagine at Ottawa that they would be allowed time to discuss these various schemes for defence as to which was the best when the battering ram was at the gate.⁵⁹⁶

Minto attributed this inaction to Canadian indifference towards defence rather than civil-military friction,⁵⁹⁷ but it strengthened Britain's desire to take measures, such as following the Governor's advice to appoint as GOC an officer more assertive than Haly, to pressure the Canadians to make the reforms that London demanded as a condition of providing military support against American attack.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹³ *LMCP II*, Minto to Roberts, 1 October 1901, pp. 76-79, Minto to Brodrick, 29 November 1901, pp. 92-93.

⁵⁹⁴ National Archives of Scotland, Dundonald Papers, GD 233/153, Papers relating to the 12th Earl's tenure as GOC Canadian Militia, Extract from the Annual Report December 1901; Earl of Dundonald, *My Army Life* (Edward Arnold, London, 1926), p. 203.

⁵⁹⁵ TNA WO 32/6366 Report of Defence Committee of Canada on Defence Scheme, 1898.

⁵⁹⁶ NLS MS 12580, Memo by Col. Townshend, 11 August 1902.

⁵⁹⁷ NLS MS 12557, Minto to Ommanney, 7 & 18 May 1901, Minto to Borden, 15 May 1901; MS 12571, Lord Minto's Canadian Correspondence, June 1902 to March 1904 Ommanney to Minto, 27 April 1903; Preston, *Imperial Defense*, p. 328.

⁵⁹⁸ K. Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (Longman, London, 1967) pp. 316ff; A. Gluek, 'The Invisible Revision of the Rush-Bagot Agreement' *CHR* 60 (1979), pp. 470-74; Gooch, *Prospect*, pp. 52-68; Preston, *Imperial Defense*, pp. 244-49, 327-38; NAS GD 233/153 Memo on War with the US and the Defence of Canada, March-May 1901.

Finding an officer capable of fulfilling these aims proved no easy task, requiring much consultation between Minto, Kitson and the War Office. Dundonald was eventually persuaded to accept the post, and as a Scottish aristocrat who had commanded Canadian troops in South Africa there were no questions about his experience, ability, or reputation. Some doubts were raised, however, about whether he was temperamentally suited to the post. Chamberlain expressed the contradiction facing them: 'I think the Canadians will be very fortunate to get Dundonald. It is more than they deserve. Nevertheless, I have no doubt they will quarrel with him after a time.'⁵⁹⁹ Chamberlain tried to ensure that the new GOC was fully briefed about the problems he was likely to encounter:

The post is a difficult one and the remuneration is altogether inadequate. Hitherto, those who have accepted the position have almost invariably come into conflict with the local authorities. It is not in my opinion a matter of blame to them but it arises from the differences of appreciation between British officers accustomed to our system and colonial politicians proceeding on other lines.⁶⁰⁰

Minto echoed these points, offering his own interpretation of what was needed to establish a sound system of military administration:

The main point is the position it is understood you should occupy here in relation to the Minister – viz. that of his military adviser and right hand man – and that your jurisdiction as regards purely military detail should not be perpetually interfered with.⁶⁰¹

Despite his warnings about the problems caused by all-pervading patronage, Minto reassured Dundonald that the excellent quality of the force provided scope to achieve much. Although recognising his subordinate position with the Canadian Government, Minto also urged upon the GOC the need to continue confidential correspondence with the Governor, arguing that this was the only way to ensure that Britain remained informed about an important aspect of imperial defence.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁹ *LMCP II*, Minto to Roberts, 11 October 1901, pp. 76-78, Minto to Brodrick, 3 January 1902, n. 1, pp. 109-111; Dundonald, *Army Life*, p. 188; K. Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson* (OUP, Oxford, 2006), p. 36.

⁶⁰⁰ NAS GD 233/153, Chamberlain to Dundonald, 7 January 1902.

⁶⁰¹ *LMCP II*, Minto to Dundonald, 26 March 1902, pp. 136-37.

⁶⁰² *LMCP II*, Minto to Dundonald, 24 March 1903, p. 276.

Dundonald appeared to have arrived at a favourable time. A belief in the inherent military superiority of Canada's militia compared to British regulars had been encouraged by their Boer War experiences, arousing a popular enthusiasm that replaced the usual indifference and creating a desire for reform. Most Canadian historians agree that 'no Canadian institution benefited more from the war than the Canadian militia.'⁶⁰³ Such enthusiasm was not universal, as doubts remained over the exact role of the force. Formal contributions to imperial defence had been forcefully rejected at the 1902 conference, and although vague agreements were reached to focus efforts on improving Canadian defences, it was not clear to what end. Laurier stressed to the new GOC that it was unnecessary to 'take the militia seriously,' as although it served a useful police function, American protection meant it was not required to defend Canada.⁶⁰⁴

Dundonald, however, *was* determined to take the militia seriously and make it an efficient force. Plans were formulated to create a 'citizen army' capable of defending Canada against American aggression, as it was hoped that emphasising this threat would encourage a more enthusiastic response.⁶⁰⁵ A comprehensively trained skeleton army would form the front-line force, to be fleshed out in an emergency to two lines of 100,000 by all those who had undertaken basic cadet training. Dundonald argued in his annual reports that achieving this aim to satisfy British hopes would require much work, as the present system failed to provide an efficient and inexpensive organisation that could be easily expanded into a war establishment.⁶⁰⁶ A comprehensive reform programme would decentralise administration by devolving certain powers to local commanders, enabling them to operate independently in wartime. Training would be modernised, while to create an army capable of undertaking campaigns, deficiencies in stores and ammunition had to be made good and essential auxiliary units such as intelligence and engineers had to be established. Identifying deficiencies in the force proved simple;⁶⁰⁷ encouraging the Canadian government to adopt his recommendations to remedy these defects, when these entailed significant expenditure (which opponents claimed included plans to spend \$12 million fortifying the border),

⁶⁰³ Miller, *Map Red*, pp. 436ff; Miller 'Borden' pp. 276-77; D. Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1984), p. 12.

⁶⁰⁴ Dundonald, *Army Life*, p. 191.

⁶⁰⁵ *LMCP II*, Minto to Dundonald, 22 November 1902, pp. 224-25; Dundonald, *Army Life*, p. 189; Miller, 'Borden', pp. 76-77; Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, p. 176.

⁶⁰⁶ NAS GD 233/132, Papers relating to the 12th Earl's tenure as GOC Canadian Militia, Annual Report on Militia 1903, Part II Recommendations.

⁶⁰⁷ NAS GD 233/133, Papers and Correspondence relating to the 12th Earl's tenure as GOC Canadian Militia, Annual Report on Militia 1902; NAS GD 233/132 Annual Report on Militia 1903; TNA CAB 17/44, Committee of Imperial Defence Miscellaneous Correspondence and Memoranda, Canada (i) Militia (ii) Defence of, 1904 to 1910, Memos by Lord Dundonald on Canadian Militia.

proved difficult and created much friction with Laurier's government. Borden recognised that any changes would have to be gradual to avoid provoking antagonism from those opposed to military expenditure. He edited Dundonald's reports and kept the recommendations confidential to allow comparison with Leach's 1898 plans that Canada claimed to have adopted with War Office approval.⁶⁰⁸ The GOC ridiculed these arguments, stressing that Laurier's government had rejected repeated promptings to implement Leach's recommendations and had failed to carry out even the most important. Dundonald's public announcement of his reform plans in an effort to push them forward provoked a rebuke from Laurier and Borden but enabled substantial progress to be made, including the establishment of the Guides and Intelligence departments. Despite these minor successes, the GOC, like his predecessors, came to realise 'the obstacles that stand in the way of efficient Canadian defence are not merely the parsimony of the Government and national apathy.' Government and popular opposition to military expenditure and preparation was widespread, many valued the militia only as a tool to 'keep the jingoes and ultra-loyalists quiet.' When combined with a 'low standard' of political morality and lukewarm French feeling towards imperial connections, it made 'the possibility of effecting the serious improvement in the condition of Canadian defence a very difficult matter.'⁶⁰⁹

Minto was thanked by Dundonald for his 'invaluable' support in their ongoing struggle for progress in militia reform and he publicly stated his belief that the new plans would improve the force.⁶¹⁰ The Governor, however, sympathised with Borden's refusal to publish the reports, believing many of Dundonald's suggestions were impractical, and he became increasingly anxious about the GOC's propensity to follow Hutton's example in appealing to Canadian public opinion. Minto agreed with Dundonald's assessment of the challenges they faced and his aim of creating an efficient force, but his experience with Hutton made it obvious that confronting the Canadian government would achieve nothing. He admitted to Brodrick that the problems with the militia were not entirely Canada's fault and bemoaned that the tension created by overenthusiastic imperial officers prevented him exercising more influence

⁶⁰⁸ NAS GD 233/133 Borden to Dundonald, 31 January & 21 February 1903.

⁶⁰⁹ NAS GD 233/133 Memo on relations Between GOC Canadian Militia and Minister of Militia, June 1903; Dundonald, *Army Life*, pp. 199-202; Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, pp. 179-82.

⁶¹⁰ NAS GD 233/133 Memo on Relations; *LMCP II*, Dundonald to Minto, 25 August 1902, p. 185, Minto to Dundonald 27 August & 22 September 1902, pp. 186, 191-92; NLS MS 12559, Minto to Arnold-Forster, 4 December 1903; Dundonald, *Army Life*, pp. 209ff.

It is very difficult to find a soldier that is capable of looking beyond purely military needs, or of recognising political considerations, and the low standard of political morality in a new country, and yet with strength of mind enough to set his face against abuses and wear them down by ability and tact. I am sure you must know well the difficulty with the purely military mind.⁶¹¹

Minto's belief that Dundonald was unlikely to remain in Canada for long proved prescient, as relations between the GOC and the government rapidly deteriorated. The battle over publication of the annual report was repeated in 1903, as Dundonald tried to spread his recommendations through the text but proved unable to escape Borden's editing.⁶¹² This was a struggle for influence rather than content as many of the proposals were accepted over time. Dundonald's increasing frustration and impatience at the gradual pace of reform necessary in Canada embroiled Minto in another major dispute between an imperial officer and the government, remarkably similar to the last and confirming Bourne's argument that 'the efforts of these British officers had been often noisy, sometimes downright offensive and always unsuccessful.'⁶¹³ Despite having apparently learned lessons from the Hutton affair, his role was still criticised by some Canadian historians,⁶¹⁴ but his behaviour illustrated a resigned acceptance of his inability to make a radical overhaul of Canadian defence along the lines he favoured.

Political patronage again provided the flashpoint. In a June 1904 address to Montreal militia officers, Dundonald took the opportunity presented to 'arouse the nation to the danger of practices which rendered organisation useless and efficiency impossible,' by attacking the government for a 'flagrant instance of political interference.'⁶¹⁵ Allegations that Fisher, the acting Minister of Militia, had removed candidates from a list of officers approved by the GOC for a new regiment in his constituency, to prevent it becoming a partisan organisation, created a new political storm over the appropriate relationship between the GOC and the government.⁶¹⁶ Minto immediately recognised that Dundonald's actions had rendered his position untenable, and that friction in the Militia Department had

⁶¹¹ *LMCP II*, Minto to Brodrick, 11 April 1903, pp. 283-4.

⁶¹² Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, p. 187.

⁶¹³ Bourne, *Balance of Power*, p. 364.

⁶¹⁴ Notably Stevens & Saywell, in *LMCP I*, pp. lviii-lxi, most other historians, such as Miller, *Canadian Career* pp. 149-54, and Morton, *Ministers and Generals* pp. 188-92, view his conduct more favourably.

⁶¹⁵ Dundonald, *Army Life*, p. 260.

⁶¹⁶ *LMCP II*, Conversation with Borden, 9 June 1904, pp. 446-68; Dundonald, *Army Life*, pp. 258ff; Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, pp. 188-92.

caused a breakdown in communications that not only prevented the rapid solution of a relatively minor problem but turned it into a major crisis. Although sympathising with the GOC's complaints about political interference Minto did not regard Dundonald as a close friend, as he had Hutton, allowing him to be more detached in his approach to this problem. Indeed Minto blamed Dundonald for much of the trouble that had occurred, dismissing him as a vain 'crank' and a 'faddist' who was more interested in grand schemes than dealing with the more immediate problems of the militia:⁶¹⁷

I had always asserted that it was quite out of the question for the GOC to exercise influence contrary to the views of his Government or influence the public with a view to carrying on projects of his own.⁶¹⁸

Despite these opinions Minto, who feared that Laurier's government was bypassing him and using Strathcona to influence the imperial authorities to recall Dundonald, advised him to wait for the manifestation of public opinion and throw the onus for the decision upon the Government so they would have to accept responsibility for their actions, rather than immediately resign: 'their political morality is publicly challenged and it is not for us to pull them out of the muddle.'⁶¹⁹ Minto, aware of the gubernatorial responsibility to ensure that colonial ministers adhered to certain standards of conduct, hoped that the government would thus finally be held to account for their 'iniquitous' military administration, and believed that the current difficulty represented a 'test case.' One Colonial Office official criticised this stance:

I do not know how Lord Minto reconciles the advice he gave Lord Dundonald with that loyalty to his ministers which his constitutional position requires. It amounts to aiding and abetting a Government servant in insubordination. But Lord Minto's despatches on these military questions clearly indicate an absence of sympathetic accord between his ministers and himself.

Although Fiddian was correct in the last regard, Stevens and Saywell's attempts to use such comments to prove that Minto was an incompetent imperialist dragoon using any

⁶¹⁷ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lady Minto, 13 & 23 June 1904, Memo, 15-16 June 1904, pp. 472-74, 485-88; Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 149-54.

⁶¹⁸ *LMCP II*, Conversation with Borden, 9 June 1904, pp. 466-88.

⁶¹⁹ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 12 June 1904, p. 472.

excuse to provoke a crisis with a government he loathed are countered by the views of senior officials like Ommanney, who argued that Minto was perfectly entitled to give this advice, and Minto's own advice to Dundonald that he should avoid contact with opposition politicians and press, especially Hughes.⁶²⁰

Minto persisted in his attempts to influence his ministers to reform military administration, although 'there was no other course open' but to accept Dundonald's dismissal.⁶²¹ Any inclination he had to support the GOC evaporated after Dundonald launched a political campaign in conjunction with the opposition. Minto criticised him for damaging efforts to eradicate 'abuses' from the militia and the standing of imperial officers, denouncing the GOC's behaviour as incompatible with such a position.⁶²² Minto had argued for Dundonald's temporary retention while challenging Laurier's government by attacking Fisher's actions as 'entirely subversive of the idea of constitutional government' and urging his removal from the Cabinet to encourage his colleagues to recognise that such behaviour could not be tolerated, but this achieved little. Laurier was understandably insistent that the GOC be removed for his insubordination, and fiercely defended his minister's actions, claiming that Fisher was merely doing his ministerial duty by ensuring that the new regiment in his own district was being properly organised.⁶²³ Minto felt he was justified in voicing his dissent to the government's opinion, refusing to accept their conception of ministerial powers, and arguing that while the minister was entitled to reject advice from his military adviser he must be prepared to justify his actions.⁶²⁴ Minto felt that the government should have publicly supported Borden in his wish for reform, but, more appreciative of his constitutional limitations, recognised that he could not insist on the retention of an insubordinate servant or upon Fisher's dismissal without damaging hopes for closer imperial links: 'Fisher's behaviour is a matter of Canadian politics which they can settle themselves.'⁶²⁵ In a subsequent discussion with Fisher Minto made clear his views that political interference in military decisions was unacceptable, although he did not believe that Fisher had been motivated by corruption, reflecting his belief that Dundonald

⁶²⁰ TNA CO 537/491, Dismissal of GOC Militia, Lord Dundonald, June 1904, CO Minutes, June 1904; *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 13 June 1904, p. 474.

⁶²¹ *LMCP II*, Journal, 14 June 1904, p. 475.

⁶²² *LMCP II*, Journal, 27 July 1904, p. 525.

⁶²³ *LMCP II*, Conversation with Laurier, 14 June 1904, Conversation with Borden, 14 June 1904, Extract from PC Committee Report, 14 June 1904, pp. 475-79.

⁶²⁴ *LMCP II*, Memo to Hon. PC, 15 June 1904, Minto to Laurier, 15 June 1904, Minto to Lyttelton, 18 June 1904, pp. 481-83, 492-96.

⁶²⁵ *LMCP II*, Memo for Yourself, 15-16 June 1904, pp. 485-88, Minto to Lyttelton, 20 June 1904, pp. 499-501, Minto to Lady Minto, 3 July 1904, pp. 509-11.

had chosen the wrong occasion to tackle the government about the ongoing problem with political influence.⁶²⁶

Minto believed he had handled the problem effectively, preventing any greater difficulty, and recognising that significant change could not be achieved solely by imperial officers. He had evolved as a constitutional Governor and developed a greater understanding of the role he could play in persuading the Canadian government to implement policies favoured by Britain by assisting in the creation of a consensus, rather than challenging any perceived infraction of imperial interests:

No one has inveighed more than I have against political influences in the Militia and perhaps I may have written too strongly in that sense in my desp[atche]s for I should be v[ery] sorry to convey the idea that the Canadian militia is past redemption. There have been grievous faults committed by our own officers – a complete want of capability to understand the conditions of a new country and the impossibility of tearing out root and branch which can only be dealt with very gradually – whilst the fatal mistake has been far too common of trying to influence Canadian public opinion by speeches on military matters in a direction which the Government may not be prepared to accept, and moreover press views on the Government through the assistance of Opposition MPs. However mistaken a Government may be in its ideas of the use of political influence in its departments, it is justified in resenting such action. Borden has many faults – but on the whole I do not believe one could have found a better Minister of Militia under present conditions – I believe him to be really anxious for the improvement of the force, and I sincerely hope it may be possible to assist him now in the direction he proposes.⁶²⁷

Laurier had commented during the ‘Dundonald incident’ on Britain’s selection of officers to command the militia: ‘If they had done it on purpose, they could not have created a more prolific source of friction between Canada and the imperial authorities.’⁶²⁸ The continual problems caused by the fractious relations between the GOC and the Canadian Government eroded Minto’s desire to maintain a system that had proved less than useful in ensuring that Canada fulfilled its defence responsibilities,⁶²⁹ especially when it combined with the increasing national consciousness created by participation in South Africa to

⁶²⁶ *LMCP II*, Conversation with Fisher, 16 June 1904, Conversation with Laurier, 17 June 1904, Minto to Lyttelton, 18 June 1904, pp. 488-96.

⁶²⁷ *LMCP II*, Minto to Chamberlain, 10 July 1904, pp. 513-15.

⁶²⁸ *LMCP II*, Laurier to Minto, 15 June 1904, p. 483.

⁶²⁹ Preston, *Imperial Defense*, pp. 317ff.

accelerate the movement for increased Canadian defence autonomy. Borden's plans to that end were made finally possible by the changes in British strategy that prevented the Governor from interrupting any alterations. The issue occupied much of Minto's attention after Hutton's removal until his own departure, during which time his opinion on the best solution shifted. Strenuous efforts to persuade Britain that as 'man on the spot' he was best qualified to advise them worked to an extent until British political upheaval removed his two strongest allies from the relevant positions.

It took some time for Minto to arrive at the magnanimous position noted above, as when Borden originally suggested amending the Militia Act to allow a Canadian officer to become GOC in the aftermath of Hutton's departure,⁶³⁰ he denounced it as a dishonourable attempt to take advantage of British preoccupation in South Africa. He did not hesitate to voice his objections and mobilised his influential supporters in Britain against the change. Minto argued that 'the result in a military sense would be disastrous,'⁶³¹ as no Canadian officer was capable of holding the command or reorganising the force, a point recognised by Borden, who only wanted to make a Canadian eligible. Anxious that the GOC's post would become a political tool when, for imperial defence, it was necessary for Britain to ensure that Canadian forces were efficient, Minto persuaded Chamberlain and Lansdowne to postpone the proposed changes pending further imperial consideration.⁶³² Despite initially opposing any closer connection between the Halifax and militia commands, Minto increasingly believed that granting the former some inspecting power, an idea supported by Kitson, provided an opportunity for Britain to retain some power. He doubted, however, that Canada would agree to augment the powers of an officer not under their jurisdiction when their aim was to enhance Dominion autonomy. An alternative was to transfer both fortresses to Canadian control and appoint an imperial officer, answerable to Ottawa, as GOC, while creating subordinate opportunities for Canadian officers.⁶³³ Minto's plans continued to evolve along similar lines over the next two years, as he battled against British indifference to proposals that threatened hopes of centralising imperial defence, symbolised by their decision to downgrade the Halifax command. To satisfy both Ottawa and London he argued that such plans would enable Canada to adopt a greater share of responsibility, thus 'bring[ing] home to the people of Canada the fact that we recognise

⁶³⁰ NLS MS 12556, Minto to Lansdowne, 18 February 1900.

⁶³¹ *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 7 & 8 February 1900, 26 March 1900, pp. 289-92, 293-95.

⁶³² *LMCP I*, Minto to Chamberlain, 6 June 1900, pp. 359-61, Minto to Lansdowne, 27 March 1900, pp. 329-30.

⁶³³ *LMCP II*, Minto to Brodrick, 19 November 1900, pp. 430-35, Minto to Chamberlain, 24 November & 5 December 1900, pp. 435-38, 442-44.

them as a bona fide factor in the defence of the Empire,' while ensuring that Britain could still direct Canadian military organisation 'in which direction we have been steadily losing.'⁶³⁴

Borden's formal introduction of plans to revise the Militia Act in April 1903, hoping to meet the public demands for increased autonomy created by Canadian successes in South Africa, produced renewed friction.⁶³⁵ Consensus that no Canadian officer was yet qualified to hold the GOC's post remained intact; Borden merely wanted to remove the perceived slight on their capabilities by revoking the clause limiting the militia command to regulars. Minto admitted that his recommendations to recognise their services after the Boer War had not materialised, but it would be

Fatal to imperial military interests to throw open the chief command to a Canadian officer – not only that, but it would render impossible any military reorganisation here which you may consider in the future...the question of imperial defence as affecting the forces of Canada, appears to me to be one in which we are fully justified in maintaining the slight influence we still possess.⁶³⁶

Dundonald's damning reports had highlighted the 'generally unsatisfactory position of Canadian defence matters,' creating fears that Canada 'ran the risk of immediate extinction in the event of war with the US.' When combined with Minto's warnings, they heightened Colonial Office anxieties about the proposed changes. Aware that Canada was unwilling to pay for reform, Britain still needed reassurance that it was at least maintaining its own defences. If America attacked, assistance to Canada could only be provided if uniform imperial defence arrangements existed, something only possible if an imperial officer familiar with British training methods was appointed as GOC. Minto argued that even the existing system, where the GOC was responsible to Ottawa, had made it difficult to ascertain the militia's progress or inform the Canadian public of their Government's lacklustre efforts, complicating British attempts to respond to developments. Appointing a Canadian would reduce opportunities for military education and render cooperation increasingly difficult.⁶³⁷

⁶³⁴ *LMCP II*, Minto to Roberts, 2 July 1901, pp. 50-51, Minto to Brodrick, 3 January & 29 May 1902, pp. 109-111, 162-64.

⁶³⁵ Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 136-55; *Map Red*, pp. 436ff.

⁶³⁶ *LMCP II*, Minto to Brodrick, 10 April 1903, pp. 281-83.

⁶³⁷ *LMCP II*, Minto to Chamberlain, 13 & 15 April 1903, pp. 284, 287-92 (CO Minutes).

Agreement existed that some reform was vital, if at least to alleviate the interminable friction generated by the existing system, which had endangered both the efficiency of the force and the remnants of British control. Ommanney dismissed Anderson's prescient suggestion to let Canada follow the example of the other self-governing colonies by appointing its own GOC and taking over the fortresses on condition of annual inspections.⁶³⁸ Minto successfully persuaded Borden and Laurier to postpone the bill pending the interchange of opinions with Britain, allowing London to formulate its own plans after Chamberlain had referred the proposed changes to the CDC. He hoped that Borden's invitation to the CID would result in the amendments being at least delayed, but also that his discussions would encourage Canadian participation in imperial defence by flattering their vanity.⁶³⁹ The purpose served by the militia had to be considered in greater detail, and a decision reached on whether it existed to fulfil the British aim of imperial service or Canada's hope of creating a national force. Minto now argued that it was too risky to transfer the bases to Canadian control; the policy could not be justified without strict conditions that Ottawa would reject and he believed that such an important part of imperial defence could not be entrusted to corrupt colonials when it offered tempting opportunities for patronage. Amalgamating the imperial and militia commands under a Lieutenant-General answerable to Britain for the fortresses but subordinate to Canada in respect to their forces offered the best solution for Minto, as it would replace the existing objectionable dual commands and open subordinate commands to Canadians, although Dundonald did not even support offering such minor concessions. Minto doubted that any Canadian government would accept the reversion to their pre-Confederation military status implied by the GOC's suggestion to reintroduce imperial troops; although he felt stationing a force in Canada for strategic purposes would strengthen imperial feeling.⁶⁴⁰

As Miller argues, Minto's delaying tactics backfired spectacularly. When Borden finally attended the CID in December 1903 Minto's main Cabinet supporters, Chamberlain and Brodrick, had been replaced respectively by the 'ineffectual and inexperienced' Lyttelton,

⁶³⁸ *LMCP II*, Minto to Chamberlain, 15 April 1903, CO Minutes, pp. 287-92.

⁶³⁹ *LMCP II*, Chamberlain to Minto, 14 May 1903, pp. 295-96; NLS MS 12559, Minto to Brodrick, 23 April 1903.

⁶⁴⁰ *LMCP II*, Minto to Chamberlain, 13 & 15 April, 28 May 1903, Minto to Borden, 13 April 1903, pp. 284-92, 302-6, Minto to Dundonald, 31 August 1903, pp. 337-38; NLS MS 12559, Minto to Brodrick, 10 August 1903; TNA CO 42/893, Military Position in Canada September 1903.

and Arnold-Forster, who had very different plans for imperial defence.⁶⁴¹ Minto, wishing to avoid the appearance of gubernatorial interference with Dominion plans, had requested British assistance to block Borden's proposals to open the command to a Canadian officer, warning that 'it would be the end of all hopes for efficiency here.' Retaining precedence of imperial rank over Canadian troops would enable Britain to maintain executive authority, but establishing a board of imperial and Canadian officers to investigate local defence issues would grant the Dominion an increased voice in policy formation. Minto's warnings and suggestions were ignored. After reconsidering Britain's obligations towards Canada, the military authorities and Colonial Office concluded that as attempts to create an efficient militia or obtain reliable information about defence conditions had only produced friction devolving responsibility to Canada was the best option.⁶⁴²

To Minto's distress the CID accepted Borden's proposals, although with certain conditions, notably the right to appoint a General to command in wartime or for occasional inspections, and regulars to the Canadian staff. Canada agreed to take over the fortresses subject to maintaining them at an accepted standard of strength and retaining British technical troops until local units were properly qualified. The relative rank of militia officers was to be recognised and opportunities were provided for Canadians to attend the Staff College, increasing local control over the force while hopefully improving its quality. Proposals were also made for Canada to raise an infantry regiment for service in the Empire, which was welcomed as a contribution to imperial defence.⁶⁴³ Unwilling to recognise the trend towards granting increased autonomy to the troublesome self-governing colonies, Minto was absolutely infuriated. He believed the decisions would be lamented by Canadians concerned with the welfare of the militia, noting in his diary that 'HM's Govt by sheer idiotcy [sic] are ruining the military position here.'⁶⁴⁴ His omission from the process had also damaged the imperial position: 'I never for an instant supposed that any such important step would be taken without some consultation with myself.' Lansdowne offered some sympathy, stating that his previous experience had led him to

⁶⁴¹ Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 145-46.

⁶⁴² *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 4 December 1903, pp. 382-84; NLS MS 12559, Minto to Arnold-Forster, 4 December 1903; TNA CO 42/896, Dundonald to Nicholson, 25 November 1903.

⁶⁴³ *LMCP II*, Lyttelton to Minto, 23 December 1903, pp.398-400; NLS MS 12567, Arnold-Forster to Borden, 16 December 1903.

⁶⁴⁴ *LMCP II*, Journal, 3 January 1904, pp. 408-9.

voice a protest, 'but I certainly derived from what was said the impression that all concerned had come to the conclusion that the change could no longer be resisted.'⁶⁴⁵

Minto seized upon several points to prevent the proposed changes being implemented. By continuing to voice his objections to proposals he regarded as 'impracticable and full of risk' Minto battled valiantly to secure the governor's role in formulating defence policy, arguing that 'before coming to decision there are alternatives which should in my opinion be carefully considered by HMG after full advice has been place before them. Matter seriously affects Imperial interests.'⁶⁴⁶ He feared that political motivations had influenced Borden's recommendations, as with an election approaching Laurier's government were appealing both to nationalists by removing the last vestiges of British control, and to imperialists by accepting increased defence responsibilities, while also attempting to increase party influence. This raised the danger of an inefficient officer being appointed, but was also opposed to public opinion, which talked 'sorrowfully' about the 'removal of the last link[s]' with Britain.⁶⁴⁷ Minto again argued that as the threat of war with America was 'far removed from an impossibility,' it was important to prevent the deterioration of Canadian forces and provide them with British guidance. As no Canadian officer was properly educated or trained to command a large force, only the appointment of an imperial officer to command all troops, with subordinate positions in the militia and at the fortresses open to Canadians, could ensure efficiency.⁶⁴⁸

Disagreement about the decisions reached at the CID emerged as Borden, driven by the displeasure prevalent among some of his colleagues about his mere attendance let alone the decisions themselves, fiercely disputed that any conditions had been attached. He asked for the references about the transfer of Halifax and Esquimalt to Canadian control to be excised from the CID minutes:

Because it is inexpedient at the very outset that the Canadian member of the Committee should appear over-zealous in assuming obligations. I think they

⁶⁴⁵ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lansdowne, 29 December 1903, pp. 403-5, Lansdowne to Minto, 11 January 1904, pp. 412-13.

⁶⁴⁶ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 5, 7, 10, & 14 January 1904, pp. 409-10, 412, 415-17, Conversation with Laurier, 9 January 1904, pp. 410-12.

⁶⁴⁷ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 14 January 1904, pp. 415-17.

⁶⁴⁸ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 5, 14 & 15 January 1904, pp. 409, 415-20.

ought to know that some exception has been taken, here, in certain quarters, to my having taken a seat on the committee and that it is very important, at this stage, to disarm opposition....[however if Britain raised the question] I know a favourable answer would be given by Canada. We are not only willing but anxious to do our share and this seems the most obvious direction for our efforts to take.⁶⁴⁹

For Minto, this highlighted the dangers of proceeding with the transfer of important imperial assets to a government not unanimously in favour of the move, and he emphasised problems raised previously in an effort to dissuade Britain. The transfer, when simultaneous with 'the entire relinquishment of direct imperial military supervision and control' would prevent Britain from ensuring the efficiency and safety of the fortresses as any conditions imposed would be disregarded and defences would not be properly maintained.⁶⁵⁰ Minto was annoyed that the CID had decided that the fortresses could not be defended against the US and would be of no value in war, as he believed that the two had to be seen as key points within any overall scheme of imperial defence, and suggested that encouraging Canadian involvement by appointing officers to command under imperial supervision would assist in maintaining proper standards. But more than military and naval issues had to be considered, and Minto argued that while both remained important military stations, retaining imperial control could also cement imperial ties at a time when they were perceived to be weakening.⁶⁵¹

Believing it his duty to prevent changes detrimental to the Empire's military position, Minto continued his efforts to stall the proposed changes, by seizing on minor points. He expressed surprise that the bill Borden had introduced to parliament omitted the conditions of British approval, that given the imperial dimensions of any war in North America it would be necessary to appoint a British general to command, and to officially recognise the imperial rank of regular officers serving with the militia.⁶⁵² Laurier, however, claimed that the British authorities had accepted the changes without any conditions, and while the Colonial Office argued that maintaining seniority for trained professionals was an important safeguard for efficiency, the issue was easily disposed of by inserting new

⁶⁴⁹ *LMCP II*, Borden to Minto, 1 March 1904, p. 428.

⁶⁵⁰ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 7 March 1904, pp. 430-32.

⁶⁵¹ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 8 June 1904, pp. 496-99, Minto to Parsons, 20 May 1904, pp. 459-60.

⁶⁵² *LMCP II*, Minto to Laurier, 17 March 1904, Minto to Borden, 17 March 1904, Laurier to Minto, 18 March 1904, Minto to Lyttelton, 18 March 1904, Borden to Minto, 12 April 1904, pp. 438-41, 448-49; NLS MS 12559, Minto to Borden, 23 March 1904.

clauses in the Act. Minto was annoyed that the Colonial Office did not take a stronger stand or adhere to military advice, but its officials complained that he did not appreciate the shifts in British policy, bemoaning that he ‘will not understand that a quasi-independent GOC is incompatible with complete Ministerial responsibility’ and that he was ‘trying to force our hand.’ Rejecting his complaints and suggestions, Minto was thanked for his contributions, but informed that if Borden, in his capacity as a member of the CID, approved the minutes (the dispute over which had arisen because the War Office had made an inaccurate report of what had occurred, recording discussions as decisions, and the views put forward by Borden as binding on his Government), then he should consider that Britain finally adopted this version.⁶⁵³

Imperial military authorities in North America offered their support for Minto’s views, as Parson, CO at Halifax, and Admiral Douglas, argued that the transfer ‘would be a fatal thing both for imperial interests and also for the safety of the places themselves.’ Both provided useful facilities for continuing the military education of a developing force.⁶⁵⁴ Minto was unable to influence the CID’s decision to hand over the fortresses, as the secretaries noted that he had not raised any points they had not already considered, but also that his reasoning was ‘eminently defective.’⁶⁵⁵ Fiddian, Minto’s severest critic in the Colonial Office, was correct to argue that he was ‘evidently annoyed that his views have not been accepted and implies that HMG are acting in ignorance of the real situation,’⁶⁵⁶ but Minto was equally accurate about what had motivated the decisions, noting that Britain would have made the decisions regardless of any advice offered:

I cannot help feeling that views apparently now in favour at home, are much actuated by the desire to reducing expenditure without considering the imperial, political and social effect such action may have.⁶⁵⁷

Minto had some influence on the final form of the military organisation adopted by Canada, even if his dreams of retaining ultimate control in imperial hands were ultimately

⁶⁵³ *LMCP II*, Lyttelton to Minto, 6 February 1904, pp. 424-26; TNA CO 42/896, CO Minutes 21 April 1904.

⁶⁵⁴ NLS MS 12580, Parsons to Minto, 2 April, 25 May & 11 August 1904, Douglas to Minto, 11 April, 6 & 26 June 1904.

⁶⁵⁵ TNA CAB 17/41, Committee of Imperial Defence Miscellaneous Correspondence and Memoranda, Defence of Halifax and Esquimalt, Memos by Clarke and ‘CLO’ 9 August 1904.

⁶⁵⁶ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 7 March 1904, n.1, pp. 430-32.

⁶⁵⁷ *LMCP II*, Minto to Douglas, 25 May 1904, pp. 462-64.

shattered. Parsons had suggested that the adoption of a scheme similar to the War Office reorganisation introduced by Esher could facilitate cooperation between regulars and militia in Canada, and he recommended the establishment of a defence council composed of senior officers and the Minister of Militia operating under the Governor's supervision.⁶⁵⁸ Borden, much influenced by Esher's proposals when in London, approved this idea, but it soon became apparent that the imperial authorities were working for very different ends from the Canadians: Minto and Parsons saw a way to maintain imperial control, Borden detected an opportunity to further Canadian autonomy and therefore his own power. Minto, certain that Borden was going to abolish the GOC Militia's post, again suggested his 'two master' plan, arguing that the GOC Halifax could become Inspector-General and senior officer on the council as a way to retain imperial control over important measures. The British authorities, by now desperate to rid themselves of Canadian problems, rejected Minto's suggestions and adopted the Canadian model where the Chief of the General Staff would be first Military Member, and whose duties were to be restricted to advising the minister. While significantly increasing Government control over defence policy, it also succeeded in harmonising civil-military relations.⁶⁵⁹

Minto admitted that 'Borden's proposed reorganisation is decidedly on the right lines'⁶⁶⁰ and urged that Otter be appointed as Inspector-General to start the system on efficient lines and prove that Canadian officers were capable. Minto had suggested that getting the duties of the Chief of Staff allotted to an imperial officer would enable Britain to retain some executive control over the militia. Asked by Borden if he could obtain Lake for this post, as an officer who had gained a distinguished reputation during his previous service in Canada, Minto urged the British authorities that after previous problems this was the only way they could hope to proceed. He hoped that any objections could be overcome so the new system could be properly established, arguing that it was not a purely military matter, 'but....one of those points upon which a proper comprehension of which imperial

⁶⁵⁸ TNA CO 42/896, Correspondence between Secretary of State and Dominion of Canada, January to June 1904, GOC Regular Troops, Canada to Governor General's Military Secretary, 16 March 1904; *LMCP II*, Borden to Minto, 29 March 1904, p. 444; NLS MS 12580, Parsons to Minto, 16, 25, & 29 March 1904.

⁶⁵⁹ TNA CO 42/896, Minto to Lyttelton, 19 April 1904; *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 11 April 1904, Minto to Borden, 15 April 1904, Borden to Minto, 15 April 1904, Minto to Parsons, 20 May 1904; Gordon, *Dominion Partnership*, pp. 175-79; Miller, *Canadian Career*, pp. 139-55; Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, pp. 193ff; Preston, *Imperial Defense*, pp. 317ff; Sarty 'Rapprochement', pp. 21-32.

⁶⁶⁰ NLS MS 12560, Lord Minto's Official Correspondence, June to November 1904, Minto to Laurier, 11 July 1904; MS 12567, Lord Minto's Correspondence with Sir Frederick Borden, May 1901 to June 1907, Minto to Borden, 18 December 1904.

connection so much depends.’⁶⁶¹ Borden thanked Minto for his efforts in overcoming opposition after Lake was appointed permanently.⁶⁶²

It proved some consolation for Minto that the Canadians appreciated his attempts to ease the transition over their new system, but he retained some influence and was invited to outline his views to the CID. These elicited some sympathy from British officials like Clarke, but did little to alter policy. Minto’s reiteration of his belief that Canada did not have the resources to take over the fortresses or the ability to organise their own command without political interference, and his, somewhat melodramatic, argument that any transfer would damage the possibilities of arranging imperial defence and even ‘tend towards the disintegration of the Empire,’ did not prevent the final handover of Halifax and Esquimalt in 1905. Some of his other ideas, such as occasional inspections by distinguished imperial officers and the appointment of regulars in Canada familiar with the region to formulate a defence scheme, were adopted, although whether this was a result of Minto’s promptings is matter of debate as argument between the military and naval authorities about the responsibility for Canada’s defence continued until 1908.⁶⁶³

Minto left Canada disappointed that his efforts to encourage the utilisation of the opportunity to develop an imperial defence policy, based on his ideas, had come to naught.⁶⁶⁴ He lamented to Lyttelton about the failure to consult him on such important decisions when he had previously been in constant communication. This was not an appropriate position for the Governor to be placed in, who, as ‘man on the spot’, was expected to know what was going on and be given reasons for the adoption of policies, and it proved particularly galling when he realised that Britain had been in direct communication with Laurier and Borden. In complaining that ‘I cannot but feel that much which I have written home during the last five years has entirely failed to explain the position of Canada towards the Mother Country,’⁶⁶⁵ Minto provided an accurate summary of his ‘achievements’ in Canada. Unable to overcome the obstacles in the way of

⁶⁶¹ *LMCP II*, Minto to Chamberlain, 10 July 1904, Minto to Lyttelton, 10 July 1904, pp. 513-16; NLS MS 12560, Minto to Borden, 11 July 1904.

⁶⁶² NLS MS 12567, Borden to Minto, 2 August 1905.

⁶⁶³ TNA CAB 5/1, Committee of Imperial Defence Colonial Memoranda (Series C), Nos. 1-40, Vol. I, 17C Transfer of the Defences of Halifax to the Canadian Government, Memo by Lord Minto, 29 December 1904; Bourne, *Balance of Power*, pp. 377ff.

⁶⁶⁴ *LMCP II*, Minto to Chamberlain, 10 July 1904, pp. 513-15.

⁶⁶⁵ *LMCP II*, Minto to Lyttelton, 7 & 8 March 1904, pp. 430-36.

exercising influence, notably British indifference and Canadian nationalism, both of which had different conceptions of regional defence from that which he propounded, Minto found that unless his views were consonant with those of his superiors, it was virtually impossible for the Governor to have any influence on defence policy in the self-governing colonies.

India: Kitchener's Other Army

Before 1907 British defence planners became obsessed with the perceived Russian threat to India. The issue 'monopolised the attention' of the CID.⁶⁶⁶ Entangling every aspect of imperial defence, Indian security became the 'paramount consideration in British policy formation.'⁶⁶⁷ Regarded as the weakest spot in the Empire, fears grew that Russia only needed to approach India's borders for British authority to collapse after its easily exploitable weakness had been exposed.⁶⁶⁸ The gloomy conclusions reached by both British and Indian studies only heightened anxieties. Russia was believed to be invulnerable to traditional British naval strategies and strong enough to strike a fatal blow to British prestige and power in India. As French naval power threatened the Admiralty's ability to rapidly provide the reinforcements vital for Indian defence, large permanent additions would have to be made to British troops in India. Simla believed the defensive strategy necessitated by financial and personnel constraints to be politically inadvisable, and urged the adoption of an aggressive plan to seize the Kabul-Kandahar line if Russia invaded Afghanistan to secure tribal and Afghan friendship.⁶⁶⁹

Reorganising the Army in India to enable it to hold the frontier against the expected Russian assault until reinforcements arrived was regarded as an essential component of attempts to improve Britain's imperial military position. Some minor reforms had followed the chaotic efforts against the tribes in 1897-98, but Curzon believed it required a more prestigious officer to implement the necessary changes, and thus, despite many warnings, welcomed Kitchener as a valuable ally. The subsequent clash between the two titanic figures overshadowed Kitchener's 'far-reaching reforms,' which overturned the 'outmoded legacy of the Mutiny' that the army existed to hold India against the Indians. Moving away from this 'obsolete and faulty' idea, Kitchener tried to create an army capable of undertaking sustained campaigns against European opponents to replace the existing glorified police force. As the danger of external aggression had superseded threats to internal order Simla focused on war with Russia, 'the main condition to meet which all Indian plans must be directed,' although efforts were made to ensure the maintenance of

⁶⁶⁶ Williams, *Defending the Empire*, p. 23.

⁶⁶⁷ K. Neilson, 'British Imperial Defence, the Middle East and India, 1914-1918' in K. Neilson and G. Kennedy (eds.), *Far-Flung Lines* (Frank Cass, London, 1997), pp. 103-4; Siegel, *Endgame*, p. 6.

⁶⁶⁸ D. Dilks (ed.), *Retreat from Power* (Macmillan, London, 1981), pp. 2-5.

⁶⁶⁹ BL IOC, L/MIL/17/5/1739 & 1740 Reports of Committees appointed to Consider the Military Defence of India, 24 December 1901 & 30 December 1902; A. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988), p. 209; Dilks, *Curzon in India Vol. 1*, pp. 162ff.

internal security by providing sufficient troops to preserve order and protect key points. Forces previously scattered across India according to arcane theories were concentrated to enable the creation of a nine division field army, the peacetime organisation and training of which would correspond to wartime formations, thus easing its mobilisation against any Russian threat to the frontier.⁶⁷⁰

Kitchener's schemes were officially sanctioned in October 1904, although it was recognised that their implementation would entail considerable time and expense. The implications of these reforms for strategic planning created a divergence between British and Indian authorities that combined with international events to encourage a re-evaluation of the best methods for countering the Russian threat. Debate revolved around the numbers of reinforcements needed to respond to a Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Britain aimed to organise its army to meet Roberts's 1891 estimates that 30,000 troops would be required immediately with a further 70,000 necessary within a year of the outbreak of war. Curzon and Kitchener denied officially committing India to these figures, arguing that Russian railway construction, notably the Orenburg to Tashkent line, had vastly increased the number of troops they could concentrate in Afghanistan and therefore the numbers needed to defend India. By 1904 the Indian authorities were arguing that up to 400,000 could be required by the second year of any conflict, prompting some historians to argue that in-depth consideration of the threat to the jewel in the imperial crown had produced 'unbalanced judgements and irrational conclusions.'⁶⁷¹

British planners and politicians reacted against perceived Indian attempts to dictate policy and become the dominant partner in imperial defence. As 'the figures entered the realm of

⁶⁷⁰ BL IOC L/MIL/17/5/1741 & 1742, Scheme(s) for the Redistribution of the Army in India and Preparation of the Army in India for War, 1904; NLS MS 12600, MS 12601; G. Barrow, *The Fire of Life* (Hutchison, London, 1942), pp. 82ff; Edwardes, *High Noon*, pp. 225ff; B. Farwell, *Armies of the Raj: From the Mutiny to Independence 1858-1947* (WW Norton, New York, 1986), pp. 204ff; Heathcote, *Military in British India*, pp. 180-85; P. Magnus, *Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist* (John Murray, London, 1958), pp. 198ff; B. Mollo, *The Indian Army* (Blandford Press, Poole, 1981), p. 189; D. Omissi, *Sepoy and the Raj* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 206-7; J. Pollock, *Kitchener* (Constable, London, 2001), passim; M.A. Yapp, 'British Perceptions of the Russian Threat' *MAS* 21 (1987), p. 664.

⁶⁷¹ McDermott, 'Revolution in British Military Thinking' pp. 101-11; NLS R.B. Haldane Papers, MS 6108 A (I) CID Recommendations on the Despatch of Reinforcements to India; Dilks, *Curzon in India*, Vol. 2, passim; Gooch, *Plans of War*, pp. 198ff; M. Howard, *The Continental Commitment* (Temple Smith, London, 1972), pp. 14-20; Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar*, pp. 110ff; K. Neilson, "'Greatly Exaggerated": The Myth of British Decline before 1914' *IHR* 13 (1991), pp. 707ff; B.J. Williams, 'The Strategic Background to the Anglo-Russian Entente of August 1907' *HJ* 9 (1966), pp. 360-373.

fantasy',⁶⁷² more realistic officials like Clarke challenged the logistical assumptions of Indian plans by emphasising the difficulties involved in maintaining the large numbers of troops Kitchener envisaged in the barren terrain of Afghanistan, which in the absence of railways would require several million camels.⁶⁷³ The Cabinet therefore concluded that planning should be based on available Indian and British resources, rather than meeting India's demands, especially when this threatened to denude Britain of forces to the extent that it could not respond to emergencies elsewhere. The reinforcements requested could not be supplied without conscription, an option that was not within the bounds of political possibility. Realisation that the military problems involved were insurmountable encouraged a belief that India could best be defended by diplomacy. The Moroccan crisis shifted British attention to the possibility of war in Europe, while Russia's defeat by Japan reduced the urgency of the ever-present difficulty. Neilson dismisses arguments that the danger of Russian attempts to regain its lost prestige by utilising the efficiency of its railway network, recently demonstrated in Manchuria, heightened the threat to India, claiming instead that a chastened Russia was now more amenable to British advances towards the settlement of imperial issues.⁶⁷⁴

Arriving in India Minto encountered a very different strategic situation from that which he may have expected, and the approaching advent of a Liberal Government committed to retrenchment in defence expenditure to fund its social reforms threatened to herald further changes. Almost immediately on appointment to the India Office, Morley sought to take advantage of diplomatic shifts to reduce the burdens defence preparations imposed on India. Suggested interventions in the disturbances in Persia and Aden provoked an explicit warning that the new government would not tolerate any 'Curzonian' expansionism.⁶⁷⁵ Yet at every turn his efforts were met with fierce resistance from Minto and Kitchener. The Viceroy undoubtedly supported the c-in-c's arguments that although Russia had been prostrated by its recent defeat it was far from crippled; it still posed a formidable threat to India that could only be countered by completing Kitchener's military reforms and

⁶⁷² R. Cavaliero, *Strangers in the Land: The Rise and Decline of the British Indian Empire* (IB Tauris, London, 2002), pp. 193-94.

⁶⁷³ Clarke, *Working Life*, pp. 195-97; Gooch, *Prospect*, pp. 78-82; Jeffery, 'Impact of the South African War', pp. 190-91.

⁶⁷⁴ K. Neilson, 'Watching the "Steamroller": British Observers and the Russian Army before 1914' *JSS* 8 (1985), pp. 199-217 & "'A Dangerous Game of American Poker": Britain and the Russo-Japanese War' *JSS* 3 (1980), pp. 63-87; P. Towle, 'The Russo-Japanese War and the Defence of India' *Military Affairs* 44 (1980), pp. 111-117.

⁶⁷⁵ NLS MS 12735, Morley to Minto, 19 January 1906; MS 12764, Kitchener to Clarke, 18 January 1906; Koss, *Morley at the India Office*, p. 114.

reaching understandings with Afghanistan to facilitate the fulfilment of British obligations.⁶⁷⁶ As he believed the opportunity presented to reconsider the amount of money spent by a poor country must be exploited, Morley emphatically disagreed, stating his 'strong feeling that the change in the military position of Russia ought to produce some change in our military policy in India,'⁶⁷⁷ and 'whether Kitchener's schemes are necessary in the change of military and diplomatic circumstances, I am obstinately dubious.'⁶⁷⁸ Imbued with an aristocratic, soldierly vision of empire, Minto argued that defending India must remain the primary concern for Simla and he endeavoured to persuade the British authorities to recognise that expensive preparations to this end could not be carelessly discarded. As in Canada, his pragmatic outlook encouraged him to stand against the perceived danger to imperial security posed by Liberal determination to reduce expenditure. Kitchener proved a reliable ally, a fellow pragmatist who recognised that when Britain's imperial position faced a multitude of threats such a utopian stance could not be safely countenanced. Dismissing warnings to be wary of Kitchener's machinations, Minto expressed relief that the c-in-c was a 'sensible' adviser and that they 'generally agreed about most things.'⁶⁷⁹

War Office opinions that India offered some scope to reduce its over-inflated estimates prompted pressure upon Morley and Simla to consider whether the British garrison was excessive and what reasonable demands could be made on Britain for reinforcements. Prompted by Esher, Morley assured Simla that the questions,

Conceal no insidious or sinister intentions, but are a plain and honest attempt to look...at the political and strategic necessities of the Empire as a whole.

Parochial, separate, isolated and divisive approaches to military organisation, directed by the whim of autocratic proconsuls, were no longer acceptable. Praising his successes, Morley reassured Kitchener that changes already sanctioned would not be undone, and he

⁶⁷⁶ NLS MS 12601, Note on the Military Policy of India; MS 12776, Roberts to Minto, 27 December 1906.

⁶⁷⁷ NLS MS 12735, Morley to Minto, 8 March 1906.

⁶⁷⁸ NLS MS 12735, Morley to Minto, 19 April 1906.

⁶⁷⁹ NLS MS 12416, Minto to Lady Minto, 5 June 1907.

sought the c-in-c's assistance to formulate plans for the new conditions imposed by tighter India Office control and a moratorium on increased expenditure.⁶⁸⁰

Esher had suggested to Morley that a deal could be reached on these terms, but also argued to Kitchener that agreeing to a temporary diminution of British drafts for India, (as suggested by Haldane to reduce War Office expenditure despite Morley's protests), would encourage the Secretary of State to look more favourably on what Kitchener regarded as most urgent.⁶⁸¹ Kitchener proved amenable to a certain extent:

I am in entire accord with your desire to reduce the cost of the Indian Army to the fullest extent compatible with the safety of the country from internal disturbance and external aggression.

If the number of units was maintained and could be rapidly brought up to fighting strength in an emergency, up to 200 men per battalion could be reduced to meet War Office requirements, although he doubted that this was the most efficient method of retrenchment. Several caveats were added to ensure Morley did not mistakenly form the impression that Kitchener would accept wholesale abandonment of his reforms. Expenditure should be more evenly distributed throughout the Empire to reduce India's burdens; India should only meet the cost of local security, while defence against Russian invasion was an imperial responsibility. Kitchener explained that the initial expenditure had been necessary to ensure effective training and create an efficient organisation, and argued that his reform schemes had to be continued:

Before we can reduce our Military expenditure in India we need a complete organisation for war and a full reserve of such stores as are necessary for the maintenance of an army in the field which cannot be hastily improvised, we must also redistribute our forces so as to get the best value out of them.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸⁰ NLS MS 12735, Morley to Minto, 15 March 1906. Compare this with Esher to Morley, 13 March 1906 in Brett (ed.) *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher, Vol. II*.

⁶⁸¹ NLS MS 12735, Morley to Kitchener, 30 March & 6 April 1906; MS 12741, Morley to Minto, 15 February 1906; *Journals and Letters*, Esher to Morley, 30 March 1906, Esher to Kitchener, 6 April 1906.

⁶⁸² NLS MS 12764, Kitchener to Minto, 30 April 1906; MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 2 May 1906; MS 12765, Kitchener to Minto, 4 July 1906; MS 12741, Minto to Morley, 12 July 1906; MS 12678, Draft Response to Gokhale.

Kitchener's arguments to Morley were echoed in the responses to other criticisms voiced in India and Britain. Duff informed the CID that the British garrison was adequate only because the absence of 'native solidarity' prevented organised rebellion. Temporary reductions were only possible in peace, but permanent measures were dangerous, destroying confidence in the stability of British rule.⁶⁸³ As Minto argued, military expenditure was a 'premium on the insurance of the country.'⁶⁸⁴

Confronted by various threats, it was difficult for the Indian authorities to abandon their traditional standpoint that continued British rule was dependent solely on military strength, any reduction of which merely encouraged unrest, something that Minto, with his military background, could appreciate. Convincing their British superiors of the legitimacy of such fears proved problematic, particularly when Whitehall was committed to economy. While Kitchener's concessions did not go as far as Morley desired, he hoped that they might prove a valuable starting position for future reductions. The CID's conclusions of August 1906 that reinforcements could not be guaranteed in war,⁶⁸⁵ that no definite pledge to provide these had ever been given, and that the eight infantry divisions India expected did not exist, shattered this fragile accord. The Army Council had decided it was essential to immediately inform Simla,

That the plans for the defence of India must be based on the actual resources of the Army in India alone, and that no more definite promise of assistance can be given than the general assurance that the Home Army would be bound to support India to the utmost extent of its power.⁶⁸⁶

As Morley gloated, 'Kitchener will be pressed to cut your Indian coat according to your cloth.'⁶⁸⁷

He was sadly mistaken if he believed India would immediately accept reductions. Their reaction was unsurprisingly predictable. Kitchener's plans had been founded on Balfour's vague parliamentary statement in August 1905 and other assurances that assistance would

⁶⁸³ NLS MS 12735, Memo by Duff, 9 May 1906.

⁶⁸⁴ NLS MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 18 April 1906.

⁶⁸⁵ NLS MS 12736, Morley to Minto, 14 September 1906; *Journals and Letters*, Esher to Morley, 26 September & 3 October 1906, Esher to Balfour, 3 October 1906.

⁶⁸⁶ NLS MS 12755, Correspondence between the Viceroy and Persons in India, July to December 1906, War Office to India Office 0164/2271 MO, 22 August 1906.

⁶⁸⁷ NLS MS 12736, Morley to Minto, 14 September 1906.

be forthcoming and he reiterated his argument that in war Britain had to demonstrate its power to fulfil its obligations by seizing advance positions:

If the best use is to be made of the limited and inadequate forces at our disposal, it is essential that [the redistribution and reorganisation schemes] should be carried systematically to conclusion.

Even then the field army was insufficient to defend the country, let alone undertake essential military action unaided. A large addition to the British garrison would be required if India's defence was to be dependent on the forces permanently maintained there. Kitchener's alternative suggestion was to consult with other colonies on the provision of reinforcements, but it was essential above all to relieve the uncertainty surrounding Indian defence.⁶⁸⁸ Minto agreed that 'it is a nuisance the Secretary of State fussing about expenditure.'⁶⁸⁹ Kitchener's views did little to curtail Morley's economising zeal, as his efforts to overhaul the military reform schemes continued apace. A committee was appointed specifically for this purpose, while Morley parroted Esher's views that Kitchener should have realised that in war all was dependent on circumstances and not based his plans on vague assumptions.⁶⁹⁰

Driven by fears of unrest and frontier lawlessness Minto continued to argue against the aimless tinkering with defence plans merely to save money and meet election pledges, and he stressed to Morley that it was important to remember the basis of British rule in India:

Every reduction of military strength or any idea in India that a sacrifice of military efficiency would be supported at home for political reasons would have dangerous effects as a weakening of both our internal strength and our capabilities of dealing with Frontier difficulties...the efficiency of the army is the real guarantee for the safety of British administration, and any loss of power in that direction would not only mean the loss of actual military strength, but would be taken as an indication of weakness which would be answered at once by an increase of disaffection. I cannot say how strongly I feel how dangerous any

⁶⁸⁸ NLS MS 12755, GOI AD (Secret) Despatch to SSI, 18 October 1906.

⁶⁸⁹ NLS MS 12765, Minto to Kitchener, 19 October 1906.

⁶⁹⁰ NLS MS 12736, Morley to Minto, 26 October 1906; MS 12741, Morley to Minto, 18 October 1906; MS 12765, Minto to Kitchener, 3 November 1906; *Journals and Letters*, Esher to Morley, 3 October 1906.

appearance of a reduction of our military prestige in India would be at the present moment.⁶⁹¹

Unfortunately this only succeeded in infuriating Morley: ‘only one thing is clear to me – the military expenditure will have to come down...’⁶⁹² Annoyed by suggestions that he did not appreciate the responsibilities of imperial rule, he disputed claims that military efficiency and security would be sacrificed for political reasons. He sympathised with India’s views about the danger of reduced military prestige, but he stressed that this could not be allowed to hinder progress; ‘I hope this does not mean that every request from the military people is to be held sacred and inexorable.’⁶⁹³ Ensuring security did not require financial extravagance, accordingly, the expenditure on Kitchener’s schemes would be spread over a longer period of time than originally proposed and the grant for special military expenditure would be reduced by £750,000 for 1907-8. The Indian authorities accepted this minor defeat gracefully because of the dispute with the War Office over payments for training,⁶⁹⁴ but the ominous prospect of military strength being determined by financial constraints loomed.

Morley became increasingly aware that the major reductions desired could not be affected by simple reassessments. A simultaneous process of diplomatic readjustment, continuing the efforts started by the Unionists, aimed to remove the *raison d’être* for Indian military preparation, but this did little to alleviate the tension between Simla and Whitehall. Diplomatic attempts to reduce India’s defensive burden had begun with the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1905, but it soon became apparent that this manoeuvre had raised more questions than it answered. As Nish argues, changes in Britain’s outlook had been guided by strategic and political considerations, and by 1905 ‘thinking had turned to the task of defending the Indian frontier without making large-scale increases in Britain’s standing army. The solution adopted...was that Japanese assistance should be sought to meet the deficiency.’⁶⁹⁵ Japan’s forces had proved their effectiveness against Russia in Manchuria, and it was believed they could reach India much more quickly than British reinforcements. With some difficulty Japan had been persuaded to extend the terms of the

⁶⁹¹ NLS MS 12736, Minto to Morley, 26 December 1906.

⁶⁹² NLS MS 12736, Morley to Minto, 27 December 1906.

⁶⁹³ NLS MS 12737, Morley to Minto, 18 January 1907, Godley to Minto, 25 January 1907.

⁶⁹⁴ NLS MS 12742, Morley to Minto, 5 & 22 February 1907; MS 12678, Papers relating to the reform of the Army in India, 1904 to 1910, Gazette of India Extraordinary, 20 March 1907.

⁶⁹⁵ I.H. Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires* (Athlone Press, London, 1966), p. 369.

alliance to include the defence of British interests in India in return for a reciprocal British promise to protect their position in Korea. Any hope that Japanese military assistance could prove an effective deterrent to Russian aggression or the solution to British defensive difficulties soon foundered on obstacles of practicality.

Arnold-Forster quickly concluded that Japanese forces could only be an adjunct to, rather than a substitute for, the Army in India. A renewed alliance could not be used as an excuse not to maintain India's military establishment.⁶⁹⁶ Fears that the Liberal Government would do exactly that were aroused when, in conjunction with the Tokyo conference on joint operations in 1906, Minto and Kitchener were asked to consider the expediency of ever asking Japan to send troops to India and what contribution of force India could make to concerted operations with Japan outside India, an idea to which Morley had grave objections.⁶⁹⁷ Simla appeared to share these objections:

In case of hostilities we do not at present consider that it would be advisable to employ Japanese troops in or through India. We are not, however, prepared to say this might never be advisable.⁶⁹⁸

Echoing earlier General Staff concerns, it was believed that apparent reliance on non-white troops for India's defence would convey a sense of weakness to the Indian population, a risk to be avoided at all costs, although use of Japanese troops to defend Seistan might be a different matter. Employment of Indian troops in Manchuria was declared impracticable, as none could be spared in war.⁶⁹⁹

There the matter rested until May 1907 when India's views were again requested after Haldane had raised the matter prior to a further conference to discuss joint plans.⁷⁰⁰ India argued that Russia's strength allowed it to conduct simultaneous offensives in Manchuria and Central Asia while Britain could not spare troops from defending the frontier. Japanese

⁶⁹⁶ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 318; K. Wilson, 'The Anglo-Japanese Alliance of August 1905 and the Defending of India: A Case of the Worst Scenario' *JICH* 21 (1991), pp. 334ff.

⁶⁹⁷ NLS MS 12735, Morley to Minto, 9 February 1906; MS 12741, Morley to Minto, 1 February 1906.

⁶⁹⁸ NLS MS 12741, Minto to Morley, 5 February 1906.

⁶⁹⁹ NLS MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 22 February & 1 March 1906, Memo by Duff, 9 May 1906.

⁷⁰⁰ NLS MS 12742, Morley to Minto, 2 May 1907, Minto to Morley, 28 April 1907.

forces would only be available if Russia adopted a passive defence, and the transfer of troops to another theatre might provoke a Russian offensive. Doubts were cast on Japan's willingness to spare sufficient troops, and it was concluded that the best means for cooperation was for them to launch active operations elsewhere. No offer could be accepted unless the proposed force was large enough to act independently away from India. Using them to maintain order or as reinforcements in Afghanistan would damage British prestige. No arrangement could be suggested that would relieve India of the burden of preparation for unaided defence, and it was inadmissible to shift these responsibilities to their allies. If these preparations were completed, there would be no need for Japanese assistance unless Britain could not provide reinforcements, and in this scenario they would have to supply enough troops to defend the Kandahar line.⁷⁰¹ This was not something the British wished to consider. Recognising that Japan had little intention of maintaining forces specifically for the purpose of assisting in the defence of India it was decided that separate British and Japanese operations in their respective theatres was the best method of assistance.⁷⁰²

Potential Japanese help only provided a temporary solution and it was evident that to effect significant reductions the threat to India had to be eliminated at source. Indian protestations about the continued threat Russia posed and the exorbitant cost of preparations required to meet it convinced the Liberal Government that diplomacy was the only viable solution. Success in this venture when their predecessors failed owed much to their willingness to trample over India's objections.⁷⁰³ Morley became Grey's most active and valuable supporter. Convinced that this new foreign policy departure was the best way to achieve his aim of reducing defence expenditure, he was relied on to quash Simla's protests.⁷⁰⁴ Morley invited many of these by his consultations with the Indian Government, but he admitted to being unsurprised by the 'incredulity, suspicion and dislike' with which the proposal was greeted.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰¹ BL IOL, L/MIL/7/17076, Treaties and Agreements with Foreign Powers – Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Cooperation of Japan in the defence of India.

⁷⁰² Gooch, *Plans of War*, p. 192; Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 319ff, 353-55; Wilson, 'Worst Scenario', pp. 350-54.

⁷⁰³ R. Greaves, 'Some Aspects of the Anglo-Russian Convention and its Working in Persia, 1907-1914' *BSOAS* 31 (1968), pp. 69ff.

⁷⁰⁴ E. Grey, *Twenty-Five Years* (1925), pp. 159-66; S. Mahajan, 'The Problems of the Defence of India and the Formulation of the Anglo-Russian Entente, 1900-1907' *Journal of Indian History* 58 (1980), pp. 175-192; Monger, *End of Isolation, 1900-1907*, pp. 281ff; Neilson, *Last Tsar*, passim; K. Wilson 'British Power in the European Balance' in Dilks, *Retreat from Power*, pp. 34ff; Wolpert, *Morley and India*, pp. 80ff

⁷⁰⁵ Morley, *Recollections*, Vol. II, p. 151.

Morley had hinted about the possible new trends in foreign policy: 'We may or may not in the fullness of time find it desirable to come to a general understanding with Russia.'⁷⁰⁶ Minto and Kitchener were specifically requested to provisionally address the question of the 'terms essential to [any] bargain from the military, strategic and political point of view' considering what India should demand that 'Russia should agree to do or refrain from doing' to meet the requirements of Indian safety.⁷⁰⁷ Minto held the Russians in even lower regard than the Americans. While he welcomed understandings with both as strengthening the security of British interests, in this instance he found it difficult to disguise his distaste at making friends with the 'mammon of unrighteousness.'⁷⁰⁸ His outbursts should have given some indication of how Simla would greet the idea of entente with India's mortal enemy, and they apparently regarded Morley's suggestions as a blank cheque to criticise government policy. Expressing a belief that Russia would recover far more rapidly from its defeat 'than is sometimes supposed possible,' Minto and Kitchener immediately highlighted the dangers this posed to the existence of the 'buffer states.'⁷⁰⁹ Their initial ideas seemed to inform many of the instructions given to Nicolson: that Russia should accept British control of Afghanistan's external relations and that it was outside their sphere of influence, while recognising British preponderance in Seistan.⁷¹⁰ Such terms would enhance Indian security, but throughout they stressed that Russian 'good faith,' especially that of its local officers, could at no stage be relied upon. Therefore India's guard could never be dropped by troop reductions: 'as long as Russia maintains her enormous armaments we must be prepared for [all] eventualities.'⁷¹¹

During the negotiations India complained that its views were not receiving appropriate regard. Slight alterations were made to their suggestions, for example, Whitehall's alteration of Simla's proposals that Russia would not extend its railway system towards Afghanistan to include British construction provoked a furious response. The provision was derided as unjustifiable and dangerous. British railways were vital to the success of their frontier policy and the preservation of peace in the region, and were not solely aimed against possible Russian advance. Security could not be sacrificed for the sake of amicable

⁷⁰⁶ NLS MS 12735, Morley to Minto, 25 January 1906.

⁷⁰⁷ NLS MS 12735, Morley to Minto, 23 March 1906.

⁷⁰⁸ NLS MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 15 February 1906.

⁷⁰⁹ NLS MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 18 & 25 April 1906; MS 12764, Minto to Kitchener, 26 April 1906.

⁷¹⁰ NLS MS 12735, Kitchener to Minto, 28 April 1906, Morley to Minto, 25 May 1906; MS 12764, Kitchener to Clarke, 18 January 1906.

⁷¹¹ NLS MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 2 May 1906, Kitchener to Minto, 28 April 1906.

relations – any moratorium handed an immediate strategic advantage to Russia in the event of a breakdown of relations:

What is however less appreciated....[is] how impotent we are under existing conditions, either adequately to defend the Amir against Russia, or even to coerce him ourselves, should this necessary railway construction be abandoned.

Without railways they would have to reconsider their whole defensive preparation.⁷¹²

Unfortunately Simla did not realise that they were merely expected to ‘rubber-stamp’ government policy, and they over-stepped the poorly-defined boundaries between British and Indian responsibilities, fatally undermining their hopes of maintaining some controlling influence over foreign policy decisions. Minto’s remarks that ‘if we are to enter upon an entente with Russia, let us bargain with her elsewhere than in Central Asia’ and that Simla should be fully consulted before the finalisation of any agreement because of the risks it posed to British security⁷¹³ only succeeded in provoking a furious rebuke from Morley:

You argue, and so to a certain degree, I think does Lord Kitchener, as if the policy of entente with Russia is an open question. That is just what it is not.

A bargain with Russia not including Central Asia was dismissed as a ‘sorry trophy of our diplomacy.’ Suggestions for ‘consultation’ with India produced derisory comparisons with Curzon’s attempts to establish it as an independent power, the Viceroy’s Executive Council could make no effective contribution: ‘His Majesty’s Government have determined their course on this issue, and it is for their agents and officers all over the world to accept it...the plain truth is...that this country cannot have two foreign policies.’ While forcefully stated, Minto’s views did not convince them to change the policy, and the

⁷¹² NLS MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 12 June 1906; MS 12764, Minto to Kitchener, 30 April 1906, Kitchener to Minto, 23 May 1906.

⁷¹³ NLS MS 12735, Minto to Morley, 12 June 1906, Minto to Godley, 14 June 1906.

Indian authorities had to make the best of the situation.⁷¹⁴ Morley acknowledged that India remained unreconciled and that he would have to keep a 'vigilant eye on his diocese.'⁷¹⁵

The intervention of Godley, Permanent Under-Secretary at the India Office, enabled the two sides to retreat from these extremist positions and work together again on the issue. Minto was urged to be less 'Curzonian' in tone. His predecessor had suggested that the Indian Government was an equal power and invited much unwelcome trouble for his superiors in London, something the Liberals did not wish to repeat. Instead, Minto should express his opinions in a deferential and reasonable tone recognising the supremacy of Whitehall.⁷¹⁶ The Viceroy admitted that the safety of Empire was dependent on united action directed by London, but if Indian interests were affected, local views could prove valuable in the formation of policy. Morley also acquiesced, agreeing that 'Asiatic policy is now the most momentous branch of foreign policy, and to leave out the opinions of Simla would be absurd.'⁷¹⁷ This did not presage harmony on the issue. India still objected to the principle of the policy and disagreement over the exact terms continued. On some issues India gained its point, for example the moratorium on railway construction was left out,⁷¹⁸ but others, such as Kitchener's suggestions that general settlements with Russia about Persia were inopportune, did little to ease troubled negotiations and were contemptuously dismissed. India had argued that maintaining influence in the Gulf and southern Persia was a better way to retain strategic advantage than the prospective friendship of a Great Power.⁷¹⁹ Concern for India's security was paramount throughout the discussions, but agreement on how to ensure this could not be reached. India retained an essentially regional outlook, but their suggestions on Persia provoked reminders that this was a political question to be decided on the 'broadest considerations of imperial policy,' and the need to relieve the perpetual strain on British resources.⁷²⁰ Morley, however, did recognise that in this respect, Indian strategic concerns had to inform the decision on division of Persia into spheres as much as they did finalisation of terms on Afghanistan.

⁷¹⁴ NLS MS 12736, Morley to Minto, 6 July 1906.

⁷¹⁵ Greaves, 'Aspects of the Anglo-Russian Convention', p. 80.

⁷¹⁶ NLS MS 12736, Godley to Minto, 3 August & 27 September 1906.

⁷¹⁷ NLS MS 12736, Minto to Morley, 25 July 1906, Morley to Minto, 15 August 1906.

⁷¹⁸ NLS MS 12736, Morley to Minto, 14 September 1906.

⁷¹⁹ NLS MS 12736, Minto to Morley, 19 September, 4 October & 17 October 1906, Morley to Minto, 20 September 1906; MS 12741, Minto to Morley, 19 September 1906.

⁷²⁰ NLS MS 12741, Morley to Minto, 24 September & 5 November 1906.

The simultaneous CID assessment of Indian defence requirements merely served to underline the importance for the Liberals of reaching agreement with Russia. The sub-committee reported in favour of

the school who look to diplomacy rather than to arms and hold that the foundation of our rule in India would be more securely strengthened by peace with Russia than by success in war with Russia.⁷²¹

Chaired by Morley, the sub-committee was formed at Esher's suggestion. He argued that 'India is the key,' its requirements governed the size of the army in peace and war on the North West Frontier was the most serious test Britain was likely to face; 'to be prepared for that eventuality is to be prepared for all others.' It was therefore necessary to have a clearly defined policy.⁷²² A certain amount of working at cross-purposes briefly clouded the conclusions reached. Those favouring continuing military preparations to meet the Russian threat, notably Kitchener, Roberts, Esher, and Minto, welcomed the endorsement of their proposals and views. It was accepted that Russia intended to seize Afghanistan by invasion or gradual absorption and thus it was vital to ultimate success in any war to complete Kitchener's schemes for the reorganisation of the Army in India. In response to an attack Britain had to adopt the aggressive strategy of seizing the Kabul-Kandahar line to check any Russian advance and secure their lines of communication. It was also essential to complete the construction of the frontier railways required to expedite the transport of the large numbers of the troops required. The committee 'ominously'⁷²³ concluded that it was a necessity to have a military organisation capable of sending 100,000 reinforcements to India in the first year of war, although it was admitted that they may have to send up to 500,000 into the field and that their rapid despatch would be dependent on the naval situation. The report believed that the question about the demands war on the frontier placed on Britain's resources had been answered.⁷²⁴

⁷²¹ Quoted in K. Wilson, 'British Power in the European Balance, 1906-1914', in Dilks (ed.), *Retreat from Power*, p. 35.

⁷²² *Journals and Letters*, Esher to Morley, 29 December 1906 & 12 January 1907, Esher to Edward VII, 21 January 1907.

⁷²³ Searle, *A New England?*, p. 483.

⁷²⁴ NLS MS 12679, Military Papers relating to India, Report of the CID Sub-committee on the Military Requirements of the Empire (India), 1 May 1907; MS 12776, Roberts to Minto, 7 November 1906 & 31 January 1907, Minto to Roberts, 20 January & 7 March 1907.

Kitchener was pleased with the report: 'It is a great thing for India to have at last converted the people at home to sensible views as regards the defence of the country. I am delighted.' Minto felt it highlighted the fact that the danger of Russian aggression was not diminishing.⁷²⁵ Their pleasure was very much misplaced. Although glad Kitchener had approved, Morley reached very different conclusions. He recognised that while the report justified Haldane's demands for a large army, it also highlighted the tremendous load of military charge and responsibility India had to carry if they did not come to terms with Russia.⁷²⁶ The hypothetical nature of the conclusions made it difficult to formulate a complete scheme, but for the Secretary of State the vital point was:

The conclusion that the despatch of 100,000 men to India in the first year of a war with Russia is a military necessity. That is one fundamental argument for the Convention, for we have not got the men to spare and that is the plain truth of it.⁷²⁷

Negotiations with Russia thus staggered to a conclusion. Minto expressed the remaining Indian objections about the inclusion of passages to prevent either Britain or Russia intervening in Afghanistan unilaterally:

It is evident that circumstances might arise which, for the safety of India, would necessitate our protecting our paramount interests in Afghanistan, and this may involve interference in the internal affairs of the country.⁷²⁸

Fearing a surreptitious attempt to gain strategic advantages, they recommended the inclusion of a similar clause for Persia, but its omission raised doubts about the good faith of Russian diplomacy and their ability to control their frontier officers. Whitehall recognised the force of this objection but stressed that Russia would not agree without its inclusion. Minto saw these clauses as a Russian effort to create friction or negate their submission that Afghanistan was outside their sphere of influence, 'which is our only direct gain from the proposed Convention.' Exasperated that India's views were being ignored, Minto suggested dropping the agreement, but his complaints were merely brushed

⁷²⁵ NLS MS 12766, Kitchener to Minto, 14 May 1907; MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 18 June 1907.

⁷²⁶ NLS MS 12737, Morley to Minto, 31 May & 28 August 1907.

⁷²⁷ NLS MS 12737, Morley to Minto, 13 June & 19 September 1907.

⁷²⁸ NLS MS 12742, Minto to Morley, 25 May & 20 August 1907; MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 15 July & 21 August 1907.

aside with comments that abandoning the policy would merely aggravate the ‘evils’ of military burdens on expenditure.⁷²⁹

Minto was perhaps consoled to an extent by the influence India had on the final terms of the Convention but he found it difficult to overcome his anti-Russian prejudices. He had complained that the agreement made ‘no contribution to the cause of peace’ and would do nothing to end the Great Game, but this only succeeded in annoying Morley. The Viceroy was forced to blatantly lie that he was pleased with the result; ‘the soundness of the bargain...is beyond criticism,’ but his sudden conversion suggests only a desire to appease his oversensitive Secretary of State to avoid friction. Even this most determined opponent had to surrender to Britain’s desire to finalise the agreement quickly, but he was unable to keep up the pretence of a favourable attitude and quickly reverted to his traditional position, arguing that he had been too strong about the likely effects on peace and that Russia would continue its advance. Eventually he admitted, as in Canada, that he had to disregard his personal prejudices for the sake of international relations.⁷³⁰

Contemporaries, and most historians, agreed on the result of the Convention: ‘it is not too much to say that this agreement put an end, once and for all, to the ‘Russian menace to India’ which had ‘haunted the minds of British statesmen and diplomatists.’⁷³¹ Minto and Kitchener’s ideas on the problems that had to be eliminated to guarantee Indian security had great influence on its final form, which convinced many that the defence of the North West Frontier against Russian attack no longer had to be provided against.⁷³² The motivations behind the agreement are a source of greater controversy. Some would agree with Wilson, who quotes Morley’s statement that in entering into the Convention the Government ‘were actuated not only by considerations affecting the Empire as a whole, but also very largely by considerations relating to India alone,’ to argue that it was ‘devised in the interests of [Britain’s] imperial position, not for the sake of the balance of power in Europe.’⁷³³ Others, however, argue that it was solely designed to gain Russian support for checking Germany in Europe, and it was necessary to perpetuate the myth of India’s

⁷²⁹ NLS MS 12737, Morley to Minto, 2 August 1907.

⁷³⁰ NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 21 August & 4 September 1907, Morley to Minto, 19 & 26 September 1907. Minto very rapidly reconsidered his conclusions, letter to Morley, 9 October 1907.

⁷³¹ H.H. Asquith, *The Genesis of the War* (Cassell, London, 1923), p. 53.

⁷³² Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 361-63.

⁷³³ Wilson, ‘British Power’, p. 37; Siegel, *Endgame*, passim.

centrality to obtain Morley's support to eliminate Simla's expected opposition.⁷³⁴ Even the traditional argument that 'from the summer of 1907 India ceased to bulk large, indeed to bulk at all, in the cycles of strategic debate in [Britain],'⁷³⁵ has now been challenged by those who claim that the demands of war with India remained the basis of British military thinking until at least 1911.⁷³⁶

Most would agree with Neilson's conclusion:

After 1907, Russia ceased to be discussed as a potential enemy in British war planning. This should not be read as meaning that the problems of defending India had been solved...By 1907, it was clear that India could not be defended within the limits imposed by the politics of finance and manpower. The Anglo-Russian Convention, although not dictated by British military concerns, provided an answer, albeit a temporary one, to this seemingly insoluble problem. While never accepted by military men in India, the defence of India lay with the Foreign Office.⁷³⁷

If the defence of India vanished from the thoughts of British military planners, it should not be imagined that India's strategists existed in limbo until 1914. For them only the largest threat to security had been eliminated by British diplomacy, although, after encountering the continued regional tension with Russia, few would actually have agreed that this was the case. Defending India against Russian invasion remained their panacea: preparation to meet this guaranteed their ability to counter the numerous other threats confronting them across the sub-continent. It was this attitude that underlay the continued resistance, led by Minto and Kitchener, to Morley's attempts to reduce expenditure. After the conclusion of the agreement, Morley approached his quest with renewed vigour. Barely was the ink dry when he started to impress on Minto that British public opinion would 'neither understand nor tolerate a continued persistency in military plans that were only justified by dangers of immediate Russian aggression.' Although he tried to reassure his Indian subordinates that he would consider the issue in a reasonable fashion,⁷³⁸ he later noted that Indian involvement in Persia 'and all the other branches of Military policy, as

⁷³⁴ Charmley, *Splendid Isolation*, pp. 239ff; Monger, *End of Isolation*, pp. 281-94.

⁷³⁵ Gooch, *Plans of War*, p. 232.

⁷³⁶ Strachan, *To Arms*, pp. 26, 198; 'The Continental Commitment', p. 85.

⁷³⁷ Neilson, *Last Tsar*, p. 136.

⁷³⁸ NLS MS 12737, Morley to Minto, 19 & 26 September 1907.

calling for readjustment since the famous Convention,⁷³⁹ had become a preoccupation. Throughout the debate Minto and Kitchener continued to argue that reducing forces was not possible, especially given the danger of frontier trouble or internal unrest.⁷⁴⁰

Kitchener argued that various factors, not just Russian aggression, governed the nature and size of the force necessary to guarantee India's security. The Indian Army served five purposes. India had to be safeguarded from external attack. While recognising that the Convention stabilised relations and removed the immediate danger of a Russian advance, he expressed doubts about whether it 'could be regarded as a complete guarantee of peace with Russia herself for many years.' India's strength had never been adjusted in response to augmentations of territory or the anxiety caused by Russia's advance towards Afghanistan. The Indian Army had to be able to fulfil Britain's obligations and responsibilities towards Afghanistan, and may have to keep the peace between them and Russia. Order on the frontier had to be maintained, and war against the tribes in combination with Afghanistan would require the full nine division field army and increase the risks faced elsewhere. The impossibility of internal revolution had to be ensured. Only force maintained British rule, and the troops available were tiny in proportion to the population. Three infantry battalions were stationed in Bengal, the centre of nationalist unrest, which was the size of France and home to 80 million people. Finally, a share had to be taken in operations outside India for the purposes of imperial defence. However, the available forces were not sufficient to face simultaneous complications, and therefore reduction would have an unfortunate and undesirable political effect.⁷⁴¹ Minto wholeheartedly supported the commander-in-chief's views, arguing that India had to retain its regional influence by providing military assistance, such as reinforcements for consulates in Persia or to maintain Britain's position in Aden. The surrounding regions were 'the glacis of our position here, where hostile intrigue, if unknown to us, might threaten the safety of the fortress.'⁷⁴²

His analogy was ill-advised, and if it was designed to infuriate Morley into redoubling his efforts, it succeeded admirably. The Secretary of State had already complained bitterly

⁷³⁹ NLS MS 12737, Morley to Minto, 8 November 1907.

⁷⁴⁰ NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 24 October & 7 November 1907.

⁷⁴¹ NLS MS 12737, Memo by Kitchener 21 October 1907 'Consideration of the Effect of the Anglo-Russian Convention on the Strength of the Army in India.'

⁷⁴² NLS MS 12737, Minto to Morley, 12 December 1907. See also, MS 12742, Minto to Morley, 16 & 17 January 1907.

about Kitchener's underhand contacts with journalists to publish his objections against the Convention:

That is not very nice...He proceeds to argue that the Convention should not be allowed to make the slightest difference in military policy and preparations in India...[Kitchener also asked the journalist to mobilise public opinion against the government's policy]...can you conceive anything more grossly disloyal than underhand machinations of this sort, first against you, whose approval of the Convention he must undoubtedly be acquainted with, and second against His Majesty's Government of whom he is the servant.⁷⁴³

His reaction against Minto's pretensions was no less fierce, as Morley dismissed the Viceroy's claims as misleading, narrow and partial. They had provoked a barrage against the 'mischievous absorption in military apprehensions and forecasts,' which:

Withdraws the best and most capable minds from the vast problems lying outside the master idea of the fortress. You are so much more than a fortress...In a poor country like India, economy is as much an element of defence as guns and forts, and to concentrate your vigour and vigilance upon [them] and upon a host of outlying matters...which only secondarily and indirectly concern you even as a garrison, seems to me a highly injurious dispersion from the other more important work of an Indian Government.

Simla was not the 'man on the spot.' It had no need to understand international policy or the buffer states.⁷⁴⁴ Morley provides the most succinct summary of divergent opinions between the centre and periphery, reflecting his distaste for militarism, but also British desire to strengthen its control over aspects of foreign and defence policy. India could not be trusted to fulfil these responsibilities because of its parochial outlook, challenging Minto's traditional viewpoint that the 'man on the spot' was the only one qualified to report on and judge the situation. Instead, Morley implied, given the vast extent of the difficulties it encountered, Simla's sole concern should be administration of the sub-continent, a further legacy of Curzon's self-aggrandisement.

⁷⁴³ NLS MS 12746, Secret Correspondence between Minto and Morley, November 1905 to November 1910, Morley to Minto, 3 October 1907.

⁷⁴⁴ NLS MS 12738, Morley to Minto, 8 January 1908.

Widespread annoyance that the views of those best informed on local conditions, integral to the formation of any over-arching imperial defence policy, ensured that resentment of Morley's cheeseparing became engrained. Kitchener bemoaned that he and Minto had been saddled with a 'man who positively hates military efficiency',⁷⁴⁵ as Secretary of State just as progress began to be made with the reform schemes. A review of these in October 1907 reported that while much remained to be done, 50% of the work was in progress or had been completed. Massive deficiencies in artillery and small arms ammunition were being made good by increased expenditure on manufacturing, while the potential problems with transport were being addressed by continued railway construction.⁷⁴⁶

Morley was not to be deterred, and he urged Minto not to let Kitchener become diverted from the subject of expenditure before the axe was swung.⁷⁴⁷ Writing to Minto in March 1908 and beginning with his usual clumsy attempts at reassurance that must have filled the Viceroy and C-in-C with dread, Morley argued that his despatch would be:

A moderate invitation to you to try to devise serious and immediate retrenchments...It cannot really be argued that the Russian convention is to make no difference whatever in India's military needs, unless you say that the Russians will not keep their word. The military policy has been framed, and the size, distribution and organisation of Indian military force settled on the principle of resisting, or being ready to resist Russian aggression. If you insist that all must go on absolutely as before though danger from Russia has ceased, and that nothing less than the existing forces would be adequate for our needs independent of Russia, then you are landed in the curiously awkward position, that we must have been carrying on government all this time with forces that were inadequate,

which in Morley's view was 'not a flattering conclusion.' He suggested dispensing with units to be added to the permanent establishment and any accompanying expenditure, discontinuing frontier railway construction, and abandoning the proposed rearrangement of divisional areas.⁷⁴⁸ He agreed with India that the Convention did not justify the abandonment of precautions necessary to ensure its observance, but the risks Kitchener had outlined could not be overstated. Not every hypothetical contingency could be prepared

⁷⁴⁵ Magnus, *Kitchener*, p. 232.

⁷⁴⁶ NLS MS 12677, Military Papers relating to India, Progress Report on the Preparation of the Indian Army for War and the Redistribution Scheme, October 1907.

⁷⁴⁷ NLS MS 12738, Morley to Minto, 27 February 1908.

⁷⁴⁸ NLS MS 12738, Morley to Minto, 12 February 1908.

for, and if India was attacked, reliance on imperial military strength was preferable to burdening India with the enormous cost of excessive of military force. Over-taxation alienated the population, which posed its own threat to security.⁷⁴⁹

Simla's reaction was predictable. Minto commented to his wife about receiving an 'incomprehensible telegram about reduction of military expenses', and that Kitchener was 'very much upset about it.' Morley was threatening to stop important work:

Which won't save him a penny for this year, as this year's work must go on, (though I suppose he thinks it will) and won't ever save anything unless he means to stop the whole of K's reorganisation, in which state everything will be left incomplete and in a state of chaos, and buckets of money will have been spent for nothing – and very likely I should think K would chuck up the whole thing and go home. Of course Morley is no doubt tremendously pressed by this House of Commons to reduce expenditure and possibly when his dispatch arrives things may be better – but really this obstruction over military expenditure has been inexcusable.⁷⁵⁰

Similar arguments were made to Morley, admitting that the Convention encouraged the idea that reductions were possible, but that the immediate stoppage of the redistribution scheme was not the best method to achieve this aim, which could be more effectively implemented by extension of the period for its completion,⁷⁵¹ an argument that became the main line of resistance to Morley's policy. Suggestions to reduce the numbers of British troops and create 'colonial battalions' at Mediterranean bases and in South Africa to provide rapid reinforcement⁷⁵² were swiftly rejected by Minto and Kitchener, who argued that Morley's ideas were based on the interpretation of a situation that had long since passed: 'Kitchener is very much opposed to any reduction of British troops, and considering present conditions in India, I fully agree with him. We cannot afford to reduce our British strength here.' It was logical that if military strength had been based on the possibility of war with Russia a reduction could be demanded after the Convention, but they had to remember the problems they faced. Sufficient force was needed to prevent

⁷⁴⁹ NLS MS 12601, Record of Lord Kitchener's Administration, SSI Despatch, No. 50, 20 March 1908.

⁷⁵⁰ NLS MS 12417, Minto to Lady Minto, 19 March 1908; MS 12768, Kitchener to Minto, 17 March 1908.

⁷⁵¹ NLS MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 19 March 1908.

⁷⁵² NLS MS 12738, Morley to Minto, 30 April 1908; MS 12743, Morley to Minto, 31 March 1908.

trouble in India rather than respond to it, they could not, therefore, rely on reinforcements that might take up to a month to arrive if they could be spared at all.⁷⁵³

It was stressed to Morley, who in May 1908 had decreed that all military building connected with Kitchener's projects be suspended unless given India Office approval,⁷⁵⁴ that 'as regards military expenditure...the cumulative effect of your various orders is to bring us to something like a standstill.' Work in progress had been interrupted, and their control over decisions had been reduced. Simla hoped to reach an agreement on military policy whereby they could regain a free hand in implementing the programme.⁷⁵⁵ An official despatch reiterated that even Kitchener's reforms did not create an army that could provide India with such a margin of safety that it could be reduced without undue risk as a consequence of the Convention. Creating an efficient army to enable India to fulfil its obligations, namely providing for internal security after placing nine divisions in the field to meet the threat from Russia, Afghanistan or the frontier tribes (as the force maintained to ensure the observance of the Convention could deal with any other external danger), was an expensive and time-consuming process. Morley's wishes could be met by completing the reorganisation 'more slowly and deliberately than hitherto contemplated' but they asked for permission to complete measures already in progress or sanctioned. Adaptation to Morley's policy that 'in view of the limited economic resources of India, and of the growing demand for expenditure on the moral and material development of the population military charges had long felt to be a burden' by allotting funds available according to volume of work, the urgency of schemes, competing demands or modifying the system of financing special expenditure. Completion of the 1904-5 programme remained within India's financial capacity:

We should not, as we consider, be justified by any financial contingencies now in sight, in deliberately accepting, not the mere possibility, but the uncertainty of being unprepared in the event of a contest with Russia. This, in our opinion, will be the real result of a curtailment of our programme.

⁷⁵³ NLS MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 2 & 8 April 1908, 13 & 21 May 1908; MS 12743, Minto to Morley, 26 June 1908; MS 12768, Kitchener to Minto, 5 & 7 April 1908, 7 & 18 May 1908.

⁷⁵⁴ Wolpert, *Morley and India*, p. 87.

⁷⁵⁵ NLS MS 12768, Kitchener to Minto, 7 May 1908.

The military authorities argued that limited scope existed for reducing expenditure given the measures they had already undertaken to increase efficiency.⁷⁵⁶

Reductions had been made inevitable by other events. Debate over the apportionment of charges had resulted in increased payments to the War Office. This had been identified by Haldane soon after the election as a way to reduce expenditure, but produced an increasingly bitter dispute as their claims interfered with Morley's economising plans, and thus India's hopes for their reform schemes. The disagreement also provided an interesting illustration of the shift in power in imperial decision making; Simla was barely consulted on the issue. It had been referred to an inter-departmental committee, where the War Office argued that as the training of recruits was more expensive than when the level of payments was settled in 1892, and that as the army was organised to supply reinforcements to India in an emergency, Simla should contribute an extra £2 million p.a. to the cost. India Office objections that no other part of the Empire was asked to pay for the raising, equipping and transporting of drafts or that Britain was incapable of supplying reinforcements were dismissed. India was willing to bear justifiable burdens, but anything more would be taken as a grievance by the educated nationalists. A compromise was reached between Morley and Haldane, who agreed that an extra payment of £300,000 was more advantageous than leaving the settlement to the Committee, despite the Indian Secretary's earlier assurances that he would 'make the strongest case that may be possible against [any] increase of the charge.'⁷⁵⁷ Simla protested in October 1908, as was their duty on behalf of India's taxpayers, who could not support the imposition of a heavy additional burden during the financial year, especially when they had already incurred increased expenditure from the unforeseen cost of the frontier military operations without any prospect of a corresponding expansion in revenues. It was unsatisfactory that they had been given no opportunity to state their case or cite savings elsewhere to protest against extravagant and unjustified War Office claims. These objections were dismissed by Morley in March 1909, although the Indian military authorities believed his arguments were unconvincing, it admitted that the discussion was closed, and 'that the Military budget in India is now burdened with an additional charge of £300,000 p.a. with nothing to show for it in return.'⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵⁶ NLS MS 12601, GOI Despatch No. 65, 2 July 1908.

⁷⁵⁷ NLS MS 12601; MS 12742, Morley to Minto, 22 February 1907; MS 12737, Morley to Minto, 31 October 1907.

⁷⁵⁸ NLS MS 12601, GOI, 29 October 1908, SSI, 19 March 1909.

As Siegel argues, defence requirements remained a preoccupation for the Indian authorities.⁷⁵⁹ Despite Morley's efforts to curtail their involvement outside India, Minto continued to claim that it was not possible to 'separate the strategical position in Persia from the possibility of Indian military assistance,' which would be called upon in an emergency. Strong opposition to the development of Persian railways to connect with Indian lines was voiced unless guarantees could be given for India's security. Similarly, they argued that potentially hostile powers had to be prevented from gaining control of the Baghdad line.⁷⁶⁰ When reviewed by India's General Staff in January 1909, it was found that progress continued with the reform schemes, albeit at a slower pace as consultation with the Secretary of State to obtain approval for new expenditure was a 'laborious process fraught with complexities and difficulties', but it was still regarded as the soundest basis for military organisation, and the best method for creating an efficient army. Deficiencies identified earlier were being eliminated, especially in transport and mobilisation stores.⁷⁶¹

Morley realised that to effect significant alterations in military policy, changes in personnel were necessary. The first opportunity presented itself as the date for Kitchener's departure approached in August 1909, by which time he had become increasingly indolent.⁷⁶² He departed India with a call for continuity in military policy, claiming this was the only way to maintain an army sufficiently efficient to fulfil India's responsibilities, and stating that he had left India with a much better prepared force, one that was stronger and able to keep the Raj safe from attack.⁷⁶³ Morley's choice of successor reflected his desire to increase his control over Indian military policy, but the appointment, like that of Minto's as Viceroy, indicated a wish for period of tranquillity after a whirlwind of reform – thus O'Moore Creagh was jokingly referred to as 'no more K.'⁷⁶⁴ Minto had some influence on the selection, distinctly asking that Barrow was not appointed to avoid resuscitating the bad feeling of the dual control dispute. He argued that Creagh was not taken seriously as a candidate, and both the Viceroy and C-in-C feared that he could not be trusted with such a complex command in times of unrest. Minto's views changed when, after soliciting further opinions on Creagh, he discovered that he was possessed of sound judgement and knew the

⁷⁵⁹ Siegel, *Endgame*, passim.

⁷⁶⁰ NLS MS 12738, Minto to Morley, 23 March 1908; MS 12744, Morley to Minto 11 & 12 May 1908; MS 12739, Minto to Morley, 6 May 1909.

⁷⁶¹ L/MIL/17/5/1810, Report of a Conference of Staff Officers held at Agra, 1909.

⁷⁶² NLS MS 12776, Minto to Bigge, 21 July 1909.

⁷⁶³ NLS MS 12601; MS 12739, Minto to Morley, 26 August 1909.

⁷⁶⁴ T. Moreman, 'Lord Kitchener, the General Staff and the Army in India, 1902-1914' in French & Reid (eds.), *British General Staff*, p. 66.

native army well, a key consideration when doubts persisted about its loyalty.⁷⁶⁵ The India Office claimed that although a surprise, Creagh's appointment had been well received.⁷⁶⁶ Minto agreed that it seemed popular, although some did not share this enthusiasm, as Bigge commented many regarded the appointment as 'preposterous.'⁷⁶⁷ Minto admitted to remaining anxious, especially when 'Scatter' Wilson was appointed as Military Secretary, but he did not think that Creagh would attempt radical changes.⁷⁶⁸

Initially these did not have the effect Morley desired. Creagh vehemently denied having been sent to India for the sole purpose of proposing reductions in the army, and he worked with the Viceroy to recommend to the Secretary of State that the military budget be fixed as it was necessary to maintain a force capable of protecting India's frontiers.⁷⁶⁹ Haig's appointment as Chief of Staff buttressed Creagh's claims. He had been a firm supporter of Kitchener's reforms, and argued that the aim of India's military policy should remain the ability to place an army of nine divisions in the field, which was necessary even if Russia was excluded from considerations given the increasing numbers of external threats they faced, while providing adequate numbers for internal security. Withdrawal of British soldiers was not an option.⁷⁷⁰ Haig took his plans further, and attempted to prepare the Indian Army for responsibilities in a potential European conflict, but only succeeded in enraging Hardinge and Morley.⁷⁷¹ He was unable to overcome the desire to focus on internal security that had become once again ingrained as the Indian Army's *raison d'être* during the previous years of unrest. His departure removed the final obstacle to retrenchment.

Military expenditure faded into the background as attention focused on implementing constitutional reforms and countering the threats posed by nationalist terrorism. Only on the very eve of his departure did Minto admit that the military budget had to be relieved,

⁷⁶⁵ NLS MS 12739, Minto to Morley, 25 February 1909; MS 12744, Minto to Morley, 27 February & 3 March 1909; MS 12770, Kitchener to Minto, 24 February 1909.

⁷⁶⁶ NLS MS 12739, Morley to Minto, 18 March, 7 April & 26 August 1909, Godley to Minto, 7 April 1909.

⁷⁶⁷ NLS MS 12739, Minto to Godley, 29 April 1909; MS 12787, Bigge to Minto, March 1909; MS 12777, Correspondence between the Viceroy and Persons in Great Britain and Abroad, 1908 to 1910, Minto to Bigge, 3 March & 21 July 1909.

⁷⁶⁸ NLS MS 12739, Minto to Morley, 20 May 1909; MS 12777, Minto to Kitchener, 1 February 1910.

⁷⁶⁹ O. Creagh, *Autobiography of Sir O'Moore Creagh* (Hutchison, London, 1923), pp. 259ff.

⁷⁷⁰ NLS Haig Papers 89e, GOI to Morley, 2 September 1909; L/MIL/17/5/1811 Report of a Conference held under the direction of the Chief of the Indian General Staff, January 1910.

⁷⁷¹ G. De Groot, *Douglas Haig, 1861-1928* (Unwin Hyman, London, 1988), pp. 133-39; C. Hardinge, *My Indian Years* (John Murray, London, 1948), pp. 15, 31-33, 65; G. Jack 'The Indian Army on the Western Front, 1914-1915: A Portrait of Collaboration' *War in History* 13 (2006), pp. 33ff.

even then he still argued that urgent expenditure on military measures be sanctioned.⁷⁷² Morley's policy only succeeded when he was able to ensure the appointment of his own nominee as Viceroy after resisting royal pressure to have Kitchener succeed Minto, something he feared would represent the establishment of the Indian Government on a military basis.⁷⁷³ The new Indian authorities could be more easily coerced into financial retrenchment, a process that culminated with the appointment of the Army in India Committee in 1912. The contentious nature of the subjects discussed meant that unanimous conclusions were impossible, and a split emerged over whether the external or internal threats should be India's primary focus. The Majority report's recommendations in favour of the latter were accepted by the Viceroy and Secretary of State. Haig's ideas that it was Simla's duty to maintain forces out of the Indian revenues for imperial service were rejected. As Afghanistan and the tribes, rather than Russia, were the most likely threat to be encountered, there was no justification for large-scale expenditure or for a field army of the size envisaged by Kitchener, a point bitterly disputed by the Minority. The limited time to implement the 'improvements' suggested, and the short-sightedness and narrow-mindedness of the committee's approach, which excluded the consideration that India may have to face several difficulties simultaneously, had disastrous consequences. As Creagh bemoaned, the Indian Army, 'was not even properly prepared for an encounter with semi-organised Asiatic enemies' and even less prepared, thanks to the parsimony of the politicians, to meet the more demanding challenges of war with a European opponent.⁷⁷⁴

In both gubernatorial posts Minto had confronted a contending vision of Empire, one based on Liberal ideals of eliminating unnecessary military expenditure wherever possible. The resulting collisions heightened his distrust of myopic politicians unable to realise British imperial power rested on military strength and reinforced his predilection to rely on advice from soldiers who shared his views. Throughout his career Minto worked with his military advisers to prevent the ideas put forward by men like Morley or Laurier undermining the pragmatic basis of the Empire; when policy was based on responding to often unexpected events it was vital to possess sufficient strength to enable Britain to protect its interests.

⁷⁷² NLS MS 12745, Minto to Crewe, 10 November 1910.

⁷⁷³ See correspondence on this issue between Morley and Minto from February to May 1910 in MS 12740, between Minto and his British correspondents in MS 12777, and between Esher and Morley in *Journals and Letters*; Wolpert, *Morley and India*, pp. 61, 96-97.

⁷⁷⁴ BL IOC L/MIL/17/5/1751-1756, Army in India Committee papers, 1911 to 1914; Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown*, pp. 218-219; Creagh, *Autobiography*, pp. 288ff; D. Goold, 'Lord Hardinge and the Mesopotamia Expedition and Inquiry, 1914-1917' *HJ* 19 (1976), pp. 920-24; Heathcote, *Military*, pp. 196-97, 230; F. Moberley, *Military Operations: The Campaign in Mesopotamia Vol. I* (HMSO, London, 1923), pp. 54ff; Moreman 'Lord Kitchener', p. 74.

Success in maintaining this principle was not always possible as many factors influencing it remained beyond Minto's control, as a governor he could only advise his British superiors on how their decisions would impact upon the periphery. Often he could influence details of policies rather than the underlying principles. Cabinet reshuffles replaced those who supported his ideas on Canadian military organisation with men more inclined to devolve greater responsibility to the Dominion, something he came to accept reluctantly, although he endeavoured to retain some measure of British influence. He had little control over the changing diplomatic priorities that complemented Liberal retrenchment initiatives, but together with Kitchener was able to influence the final form of the agreements affecting India by ensuring that measures essential for its security represented a central theme, while his warnings about continued Russian aggrandisement were eventually proved correct. In partnership they continually thwarted Morley's ill-fated efforts to derail the reform schemes by highlighting the dangers such moves entailed, and the fact that Morley succeeded in reducing expenditure only after removing both is fitting testament to the influence the pragmatic viewpoint could exercise.

5. Conclusion

Viceroy and Governors General were but fleeting presences in the countries they were sent to rule, often struggling against a tide of longer-term developments over which they had no control. The evolution of intra-imperial relationships, constitutional changes within colonies, and shifting British defence or foreign policies in the period before 1914 had significant results for the powers wielded by the 'men on the spot.' In the self-governing colonies, Governors had to forge often uneasy partnerships with governments that resented their very presence as an affront to emerging national consciousness. In India, the sheer volume of work could overwhelm even the most able and energetic Viceroy. In both, governors were beset by governments in London apparently indifferent to local concerns, required by necessity to always view these in relation to the increasingly complex web of Britain's global interests.

Pragmatism was a necessary virtue in such circumstances, and it was a vital requirement for governing a heterogeneous empire like Britain's. It was something that Britain's aristocrats were thought to possess in abundance, one of the many qualities that were believed to suit them for imperial government. Experience of ceremonial roles was thought to make them ideal to carry out the public functions that provided an additional burden for frequently overworked Governors but played a vital role in projecting British prestige and power to the Empire's inhabitants. Many had held official positions either in Britain or the colonies, often in the military, and the knowledge this provided of imperial defence conditions was an important consideration for promoting them to more senior positions. Imperial administration, even the more prestigious posts, rarely attracted more ambitious politicians who disliked being detached from the centre of power. Often such men were not welcome, as governments realised that appointing as governors overzealous imperialists determined to follow their own policy agendas could create unexpected problems. They preferred to appoint reliable and restrained peers to important posts; men who shared their assumptions and would implement policies as instructed and provide information essential to decision-making. Defence had become a central element in imperial government, often acting as a guiding principle in policy formation, as it was believed that the Empire was vital to retaining Britain's leading international position when it was facing an increasing number of challenges. Proconsuls with military experience or knowledge were especially valued in these circumstances, as they could persuade otherwise reluctant colonials to

make appropriate contributions to imperial defence, or ensure that defending India was afforded the priority it necessitated.

Minto was the product of a society that valued the contribution of aristocratic amateurs, and recognised that he owed his advancement to a cultural milieu that favoured the contributions of such men over a more professional approach. He maintained a pragmatic outlook throughout his imperial career and always regarded defence issues as his most important duty. His efforts are proof that despite the evolving nature of a governor's duties, they remained more than mere ornaments, as even an apparent 'mediocrity' could have some influence on policy formation. Minto's ideas were often adopted and influenced many decisions on defence or foreign policy relating to Canada and India, frequently overruling the objections of officials in Britain. If his efforts were frustrated, this was mainly due to changing personnel or policy priorities in Britain. Despite being a junior partner in the imperial administrative structure, Minto was often able to set the agenda for policies in his posts, particularly in India, and his analyses of information on local conditions were always considered in decision-making. The Empire remained a heterogeneous and complex institution, but the experiences and characters of those who served in higher positions across its different regions provide some element of continuity. All proconsuls had to deal with limitations imposed by the actions and policies of their predecessors; all faced equally difficult relationships with their superiors and had to challenge their unrealistic presumptions about what could be achieved; all relied on the support of their military advisers to ensure that defending British interests remained the priority for imperial government, but perhaps few confronted them to such extremes as Lord Minto.

No amount of prior planning or briefing, if they were fortunate enough to be granted such a privilege officially, could fully prepare a Governor for the situation they confronted on arrival, even if the problems their predecessor had created were well publicised. No outgoing incumbent wished to publicise their own failings either and as such the incoming replacement would often be given a somewhat rose-tinted version of the situation they were inheriting. The actions and policies of a predecessor could remain a major influence throughout the tenure of the new man, in extreme cases setting the parameters for their entire tenure. Chamberlain may not have been directly influenced in his decision to appoint Minto by the need to replace Aberdeen with someone more in sympathy with his policies

and less in thrall to Laurier's government, but, together with Minto's previous Canadian experience, it was undoubtedly a consideration, as illustrated by Hutton's discussions before his departure. Aberdeen was perhaps glad that his tenure was dominated by domestic issues, rather than imperial problems, as these were more in line with his political ideas. Ensuring that political friction did not degenerate into crises endangering the stability of the Dominion remained an important gubernatorial duty, but not his only one. Minto's focus on Canada's role in the Empire, often at Chamberlain's prompting, proved to be an unwelcome contrast with a predecessor who had been little short of indolent in this respect. The early efforts of Minto and his somewhat overenthusiastic GOC to reignite the fading embers of Canadian military enthusiasm proved remarkably successful. Although Minto recognised that he had to proceed warily in this respect, their achievements in encouraging respect for the military as a profession and creating awareness of the need for reform throughout the militia establishment, were applauded by his superiors.

The situation confronting Minto on arrival in India was very different. Here he was immediately faced with a series of crises, all caused by his predecessor's policies. Finding someone capable of restoring stability in this turbulent atmosphere was the main aim of Balfour's government in choosing a successor for Curzon, about whom historical debate rages. The departing Viceroy, although brilliant in many respects, had discovered to his cost that more than an outstanding intellect was required to make a success of the office. Respect for colleagues, subordinates and the native population all contributed, but Curzon denigrated the work of all his officials by refusing to delegate even the most minor responsibilities and his contempt for Indian aspirations and opinion was amply demonstrated by his decision to partition Bengal. A willingness to accept one's proper place in the constitutional hierarchy by implementing policies as ordered rather than pursuing personal objectives in accordance with purely regional interests, without any reference to wider British interests, particularly maintaining amicable relations with Russia, was equally important. Curzon failed on all these counts, and as a result became increasingly detached from his Cabinet superiors. Believing they were determined to thwart, or were incapable of understanding, his aims to strengthen Britain's position in India, he became more steadfast in his refusal to accept their advice, and their relationship deteriorated rapidly. His own hubristic desire to work in partnership with the most famous soldier in the Empire, Kitchener, proved his undoing, as during their initial 'honeymoon' period he had no conception that the government would not support him in the event of any dispute.

Minto was not their first choice, but he proved more capable of fulfilling the short-term objectives set out by Balfour's government than another zealous imperialist figure like Milner would have been. His recent Canadian experiences and links with the Unionist network undoubtedly influenced the decision to appoint him to Simla, but many saw him as a less authoritarian figure than Curzon who could lead rather than dictate in India. Any respect Minto retained for his fellow proconsul quickly evaporated in the muddled circumstances of his arrival, and those unfortunate events did much to colour his attitude towards many of Curzon's policies. The chaos he inherited across several fronts did little to help. Minto worked hard to restore proper levels of responsibility to previously emasculated government officials. The problems created by Curzon haunted Minto throughout his Viceroyalty. The unrest started by the partition of Bengal rapidly spread throughout India and required harsh measures to contain, while Curzon's aggressive adventures in Tibet encouraged Chinese attempts to reassert their suzerainty. More neglected by historians are the difficulties created by Curzon's frontier reforms. While these helped improve administration it was far from the panacea envisaged by his biographers, who are mistaken to take the claims made for its success in the heated atmosphere of Curzon's departure at face value, and in any case these were built on a foundation of lies and deceit. Deliberate failure to report crime or raids created a false impression that the frontier had become a haven of peace and tranquillity. It was nothing of the sort, but the perception Curzon had created, particularly about reduced expenditure, unduly complicated the task Minto confronted in restoring order. Lawlessness continued unabated, and Minto soon discovered that Curzon had forced through his changes against the better advice of his officials, implementing them in areas where they not only had little chance of success, but also endangered the lives of British officers. Troubles in Waziristan highlighted to Minto the importance of adopting a pragmatic approach to frontier unrest when it became obvious that military options would not be authorised. Various policies were attempted to contain the troubles in this particularly turbulent district, which demonstrated for many the folly of the idea that any settled policy could be applied wholesale across such a heterogeneous region. For senior officials like Minto, the overriding concern throughout was to maintain stability in an area of key strategic importance.

Minto's relationship with his superiors also did much to set the parameters of his gubernatorial career. In Canada, this proved to be a dual role, as he was forced to act as a bridge between the imperialists he served in London, and the nationalists over whom he nominally reigned in Ottawa. Advising both sides on both imperial and foreign policy was an important duty for governors in the self-governing areas of the Empire. In the early stages of his Canadian career Minto worked hard to strengthen the Dominion's links with the Empire, investigating in detail the mechanics of Canadian military contributions. He supported Chamberlain's efforts to obtain military support from around the Empire as war approached in South Africa. Minto emphasised to Laurier throughout the contingents crisis that a significant element of public and Cabinet opinion supported the despatch of troops. His most important contribution was reminding Laurier during their frequent discussions, that while Britain was not officially requesting military support from Canada it would welcome any 'spontaneous offer' and that any contribution may prove valuable for more practical reasons, as Canada was reliant on Britain's diplomatic support against America. Such interventions provided an example of how the Governor could discreetly influence the policies of the local government. Minto also showed some understanding of local sentiment when he made efforts to ensure that the contingents retained their Canadian character and remained as distinct units. To protect what he regarded as the governor's proper sphere of influence and powers over imperial issues Minto remained involved in the organisation of subsequent contingents, working in close contact with both the imperial authorities in Britain, as well as with Borden and the militia in Canada.

Events surrounding Canadian involvement in South Africa did much to influence Minto's conceptions of the best way to advance Chamberlain's plans to strengthen links between Britain and the self-governing colonies. His investigations into Canadian attitudes towards plans for any form of imperial council, as suggested by Chamberlain in March 1900, or the adoption of any greater defensive responsibilities, revealed that informal methods and reliance on the sentimental links with the 'mother country' were the best way to proceed. It proved difficult to strike a balance between persuading Chamberlain that Canada would not welcome any attempts to enforce closer links and persuading Laurier to accept Canada's role in imperial defence. Eventually Chamberlain came to accept, especially after his failures at the 1902 Conference, that commercial links were the best way to proceed, as these held out the possibility of material advantages, rather than expensive obligations, for the Dominion. The information provided by Minto did much to influence his decisions in this regard. Minto increasingly came to accept the difficulties under which Laurier

laboured in maintaining the stability of the Confederation, the fragility of which had been alarmingly exposed during both his and Aberdeen's tenure. He regretted that more had not been done to encourage Canada to accept its imperial responsibilities during his time, and that many opportunities to do so, particularly after the Boer War, had been lost, although he blamed British indifference for many of these problems. Minto developed a greater understanding of Canada's attitudes towards the Empire and why, under Laurier, they proved reluctant to do more, although he never stopped pressing the issue, and his predictions that sentimental connections could be relied upon more than formal obligations was proved correct in 1914.

Unrealistic expectations were also at the heart of the other issue that dominated his time in Canada, although in this instance it was the Dominion that was at fault. Minto could do little to solve the main issues at stake, particularly over Alaska, but he played an important role in pushing the Canadians towards accepting the agreement, by persuading them that their aims were unlikely to be achieved and that it was therefore prudent to accept favourable terms when offered. His contacts with the British foreign-policy establishment, notably Lansdowne and successive ambassadors to Washington, made him an important intermediary in the process of solving long-running disputes. It proved difficult for Minto to overcome his anti-American prejudices, and his constant contact with Canadian opinion strongly reinforced these attitudes. But this proved to be another area where a pragmatic approach was vital to finding a solution for an apparently intractable problem. Minto shared Laurier's indignation at the shameful treatment of the Canadians by both the British and Americans, who both seemed to regard the apex of the North Atlantic Triangle as little more than a hindrance to the normalisation of relations. He also recognised that the Canadians must accept the reality of American occupation in Alaska, and that neglect of their allegedly vital national interests until some obvious economic gain could be obtained had fatally undermined their arguments. Canada was responsible for its own predicament, but Minto believed it should at least be treated fairly. His intervention with Laurier to arrange the meetings with the American ambassador in London in 1902 during the imperial conference was the first step towards the final settlement. During the negotiations to establish the Tribunal Minto worked assiduously to ensure that Canada's viewpoints were being taken into account, particularly their objections, which he wholeheartedly shared, to Roosevelt's choice of representatives. He also understood Canadian indignation at the final decision, which illustrated that Britain's pragmatic approach to policy extended to foreign affairs – sacrificing distant, and to Britain, unimportant interests, was the best way to

defend key assets. He was infuriated by the way this was expressed through attacks on British integrity and honour, but also by apparent British indifference. His efforts to assuage Canadian anger by encouraging Britain to provide some form of explanation came to naught, but he continued his attempts to prevent Laurier making rash decisions founded on anger, and to reconcile the Canadians to the decision. While not entirely successful, this was appreciated by the Colonial Office, and with time, the issue became less contentious. Minto's actions throughout the protracted solution of the Alaska boundary dispute demonstrated the continued importance of the Governor at a time when the self-governing colonies lacked control over their external affairs. Influence in Britain could ensure that the Dominion's concerns were at least given a fair hearing, although much was dependent on the power of the Colonial Secretary in the Cabinet, as demonstrated when Lyttelton replaced Chamberlain. To a certain extent, the Governor became a proto-ambassador for Britain, a role that Grey extended after 1904.

Minto was unfortunate in both Canada and India that despite being appointed by the Unionists, he had to work predominantly with Liberals. Although his relationship with Morley was remarkably harmonious, demonstrated by the way they worked in partnership to introduce the reforms, over certain issues it predictably began to break down. Their respective viewpoints on acceptable levels of interference in everyday Indian administration or the appropriate weight to be given to the views expressed by the 'man on the spot' did little to ease the tension that inevitably built up in a claustrophobic relationship. Defence of India's North West Frontier provides a prime example of the problems Minto faced. Ensuring security within this key strategic region was, in Minto's opinion, an overarching priority for the Government of India. For Morley, although he recognised its importance, defence could not be the ultimate concern, and could no longer monopolise the attention or resources of the Raj. Improving the lot of ordinary Indians would be equally successful in reducing the many threats that Simla faced.

Such ideals were admirable, but utopian, bearing little resemblance to the reality confronted by Minto's government. The Viceroy found it particularly galling that his own successful efforts to stabilise Britain's relations with its perennially unpredictable northern neighbour after the damage caused by Curzon, were being dangerously undermined by British foreign policy. The strong personal friendship Minto established with Habibullah proved invaluable after 1907, and probably did more than any other factor to prevent the

deteriorating relations with Afghanistan descending into conflict. The fiercely independent Afghans were understandably annoyed at being marginalised on issues that directly affected their own sovereignty, and these were exploited by the powerful anti-British party to create a succession of incidents that threatened to endanger the peace of the frontier, whether by encouraging tribal raiding or interrupting cross-border trade. Minto's efforts to persuade the Amir to accept the terms of the Anglo-Russian Convention were complicated by such difficulties, but throughout he also had to direct his energies towards explaining to Morley the difficulties that thoughtlessly implemented foreign policies could create for those responsible for everyday administration. Imperial governors were often criticised for their parochial outlook, but the British authorities were sometimes equally guilty of being unable to see how measures designed to protect the whole wood might damage individual tress.

Dealing with frontier unrest in the widest sense was another issue to create friction between Minto and Morley. The Indian Secretary never seemed to appreciate the problems this troublesome region could create for a Viceroy, and was apparently driven throughout his tenure by a desire to fulfil Liberal pledges to reduce expenditure and avoid new obligations. Most Viceroys would have accepted these aims, but not to the extent that security was being neglected; defending the subjects of the Raj was their primary duty. Minto's assertions that only swift military action could curtail tribal lawlessness were ultimately proved correct by the successes achieved against the Zakka Khels and Mohmands in 1908, which had provided some measure of vindication for both Curzon and Kitchener's policies, as these had made possible an efficiently organised response to the unrest. Simla proved unable to convince Morley that expeditions by themselves were pointless, allowing the worst offenders to escape unpunished and leaving only a legacy of hatred to be exploited by the peculiarly inflammable brand of fundamentalist Islam prevalent in the region. India had to tailor its responses accordingly, forced to stifle its annoyance that if left to its own devices the trouble caused by tribes like the Zakka Khels would not have been allowed to spiral out of control to the extent that they posed a serious threat to the safety of the frontier. Minto's policy of recognising that the endemic unrest along the frontier did not necessarily indicate a failure of British rule and that in certain circumstances lawlessness could only be curtailed by military action meant that he bestowed a far more favourable legacy to Hardinge in this area than had been left to him by Curzon. Although no Viceroy wished to deliberately provoke confrontation with the

tribes, Minto left India wondering how much more could have been achieved if he had been given free rein to launch the policy he favoured.

Despite the success of Willcocks's operations, Minto recognised that the distribution of modern rifles throughout the frontier rendered any future military engagement with the tribes more dangerous to the British forces. He fought hard to introduce policies that could interdict the flow of rifles from Muscat, but yet again friction resulted with Morley, who insisted that the problems this would create with Britain's friends, especially France, be paramount over the fact that these weapons were being used to kill British soldiers. The Secretary of State could only see increased expenditure and responsibilities in any measures that Minto suggested to tackle this problem. He could not comprehend the long-term impact the arms traffic would have on the military conditions of the frontier, and it was only when Minto had the backing of the Admiralty, who were more able to see the strategic issue at hand, to deal with the trade was he able to take any action. Minto's measures, particularly the blockade, achieved some measure of success, but India was left again frustrated that more could have been done. Due partly to the problems created by Curzon, and partly to Morley's character, the trend during Minto's Viceroyalty was towards centralising power in London. Minto fought against this wherever possible, and particularly over matters like frontier defence where a rapid response was vital, and his views, if not always accepted, were always taken into account. To this extent, the Viceroy retained some influence.

Minto's imperial career coincided with a period of dramatic change in British defence policies which by their very nature could not fail to have significant impact upon its Empire. His expertise on defensive matters was one of the reasons for his appointment to both posts, and it remained his primary interest. Minto endeavoured to involve himself in all the important decisions on defence in Canada and India, where he invariably supported the programmes of his military advisers. In Canada, this proved to be a complex problem, little helped by the characters of the generals appointed. The failure to resolve the difficulties created by the poorly defined responsibilities of the main officials, and the clash between zealous British military professionals and Canadian politicians with no interest in defence beyond any material gain that could be obtained, meant that friction was inevitable. Minto saw in the crisis over Hutton an opportunity to establish Canada's militia on a proper footing, or at least expose the corruption and interference damaging attempts at

reform. But, blinded by his friendship with Hutton he handled the matter ineptly, as he eventually recognised, and endeavoured to move more cautiously in future, as seen in his relations with Dundonald. Minto had been desperate to remove Haly as interim GOC, believing that his easy-going attitude would only encourage Canadian indifference towards its defence. He undoubtedly supported the efforts of the new GOC to create a defensive system more suited to Canadian requirements, but was dismayed to find himself embroiled in yet another civil-military dispute. Having learned his lesson with Hutton, Minto saw he could not support Dundonald and merely tried again to solve the inherent dilemmas by trying to have the GOC's duties properly defined. Minto began to recognise the limitations of his office during the debates over the revision of the Militia Act, when his own plans and his objections to the Canadian suggestions were rejected. On the eve of his departure he realised that it was unwise to force Canada to accept anything that had obvious wider imperial implications, and that therefore it was best to establish a system favourable to Canadian opinion and conditions, and although he argued for the retention of some measure of imperial influence, he worked with Borden to ensure the new system started on the best footing possible.

Concerns were raised on his appointment to India that Minto would be dominated by Kitchener, who could achieve his ambition of running the Raj as a military dictatorship. Such fears proved unfounded, and the Viceroy and C-in-C worked together in an effective partnership to frustrate some of Morley's more drastic plans for the reduction of Indian defence expenditure, much to the Secretary of State's annoyance. Minto fully supported Kitchener's reforms, believing they had brought a much needed improvement to the efficiency of the Army in India. As with frontier policy, Minto's overriding concern was to protect Indian security, this could only be achieved by maintaining troops at suitable levels. As had been the case in Canada, Minto saw the Empire as Britain's main source of strength, and he was fiercely opposed to undermining this by making agreements with potentially unreliable allies. His attitude towards the Anglo-Russian Convention infuriated Morley, who saw it as a way to advance the 'cause of peace' and more importantly, reduce Indian defence expenditure. Minto was never fully reconciled to this measure, but was willing to see the benefits it brought to Britain's security, even if it produced local annoyances. Minto and Kitchener were at least able to influence the terms of the agreement to some extent, as the vital concerns of Indian security, particularly maintaining British influence in southern Persia and preventing Russian interference in Afghanistan were protected by the treaty. After the Convention, a long battle of attrition was fought with

Morley over reducing India's defence commitments. Together Minto and Kitchener were able to achieve some measure of success in this regard, ensuring that Kitchener's reform plans were continued, albeit at a slower pace. Morley was not to be deterred, however, and his replacement of Kitchener with a more pliable officer, and Minto with a Viceroy with administrative, rather than gubernatorial experience, ensured that progress could be made towards achieving his aims of reducing expenditure and focussing Indian attention on its primary duty of administering the Raj. Unfortunately this removed men who were capable of seeing the wider picture of Indian strategy, and the determination to reduce Indian defence expenditure in ignorance of its defence requirements, which Minto and Kitchener had always opposed, would only have disastrous consequences for the Indian Army.

Minto's appointments to the two most important posts in the Empire had been a surprise to some, yet his aristocratic background, imperialist outlook and military experience made him a typical governor. He governed during a period when the role was being redefined, either by returning power to London, or by accommodating the nationalistic aspirations of the self-governing colonies. The dramatic changes British policy was undergoing, particularly those relating to diplomacy or defence, ensured that the Governor could retain some influence on the decision-making process, as this still had to be informed by local requirements, of which 'men on the spot' were often the best judges. Minto exemplified the pragmatic approach Britain adopted towards Empire, recognising that responding to events was the best method of continuing on a steady course. Such methods allowed him depart both Ottawa and Simla, very different parts of the Empire, having avoided any major crises and leaving them in better condition than when he arrived. In this sense, the most important consideration for those governing the Empire, pragmatic imperialism had triumphed.

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